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BRITAIN'S BESTSELLING FAMILY HISTORY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 223 NOVEMBER 2024 £5.75

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?®

THEATRICAL KIN
FIND ONLINE RECORDS

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Discover how digital newspapers will transform your family tree and where to find more online

LIVING IN DARKNESS

How blackouts affected the home front during WW2

TRANSCRIPTION TUESDAY 2024

Join our volunteer event

Researching a mystery photo led to a fascinating discovery

SCOTTISH DEATH RECORDS

Get more from these vital records

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- Trace Methodists online
- Explore your East Sussex roots
- A 17th-century charity petition

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Welcome

Sarah's Top Tip

Always search for a will, especially post-1857 – they can be fascinating

EUREKA MOMENT

'Researching This Mystery Photo Led To A Big Surprise'

Ever since the price of post-1857 wills dropped and it became easier to order them online (via **probatesearch.service.gov.uk**) I have ordered dozens of them. They can be dull and uninformative, but they can also be family history gold as Jenny Wears found out in this month's 'Eureka Moment' (**page 58**). Just as I try to find someone in every census, I also check the probate calendar for all deaths after 1857. Wills can clarify relationships (including women's married names), and may even reveal some of the personality of the person who made them.

Get In Touch

Advertising
t 0117 300 8803
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When we launched *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* in 2007, newspapers were only really useful if you knew exactly where to look. Family historians used them to search for births, marriages, deaths and obituaries, because those were events where you knew the date they happened and could limit the hours spent scrolling through microfilms. However, these days digitisation has made newspapers an essential tool for family historians. I hope Chloe's article on **page 14** will inspire you to dig deeper into what's available. And, although we tend to focus on UK resources, it is really helpful checking out some of the great newspaper websites overseas, especially those with strong connections to the UK. I have uncovered so many fascinating family stories using newspaper records, and they have really brought my research to life. I would probably say that they are now my favourite tool in the genealogy toolkit. Please share some of your discoveries that have been unlocked by newspapers.

I also want to encourage all of our wonderful readers to get involved in Transcription Tuesday this year. We have moved our annual event to the autumn, and I hope that you will find some time to get stuck in and help out. You can read about the online projects and how to take part on **page 20**. The event is on 5 November, so it should go with a bang!

Sarah

Sarah Williams Editor
sarah.williams@ourmedia.co.uk

Contributors

Chloe O'Shea
Chloe is a professional genealogist and blogger (**thepastrevealed.co.uk**) who shares her passion for historic newspapers and tips on how to get more from them on **page 14**.

Katharine Cockin
On **page 28** Katharine shares advice picked up from her work leading the online project 'Search for Theatrical Ancestors' (**ellenterryarchive.essex.ac.uk/star**).

Nick Peers
There's nothing Nick, our technology writer, likes more than sorting and improving old photographs, and he thinks you'll love Upscayl which he demonstrates on **page 50**.

COVER IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES/MR AND MRS JAMES GRAY OF PLAISTOW IN LONDON READ A COPY OF THE *DAILY HERALD* IN THEIR BACKYARD, 23 AUGUST 1926

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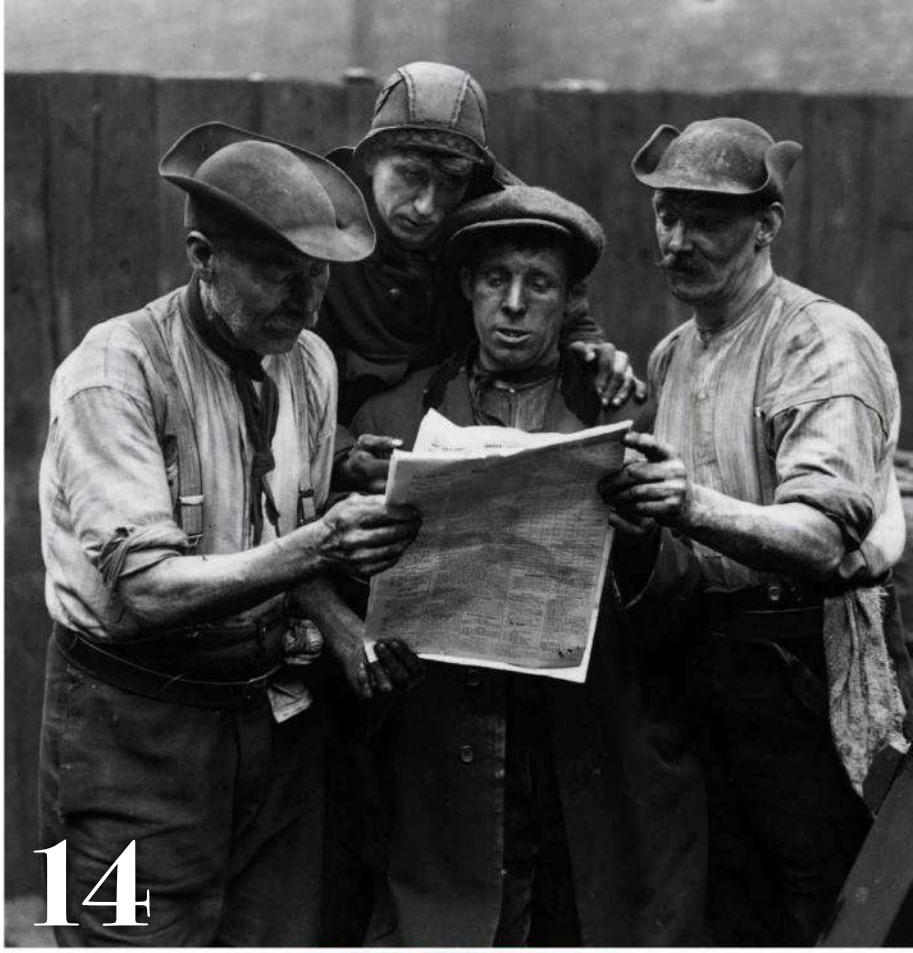

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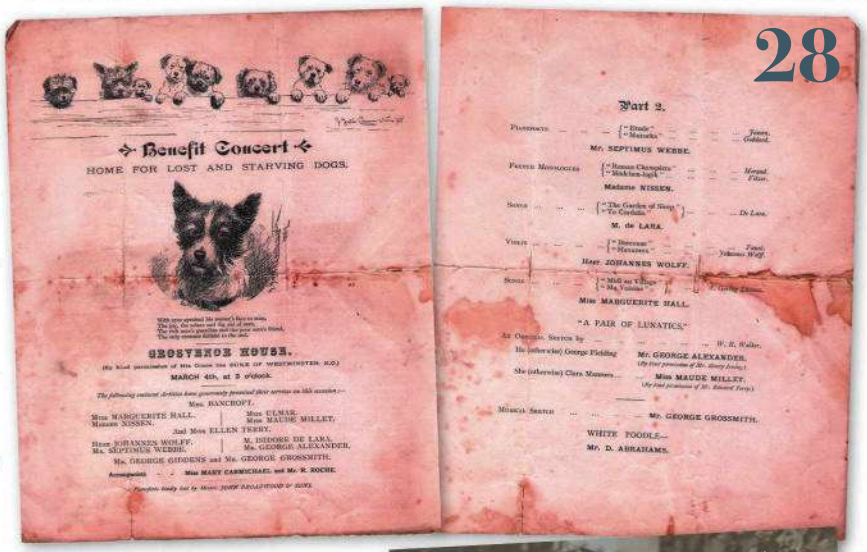

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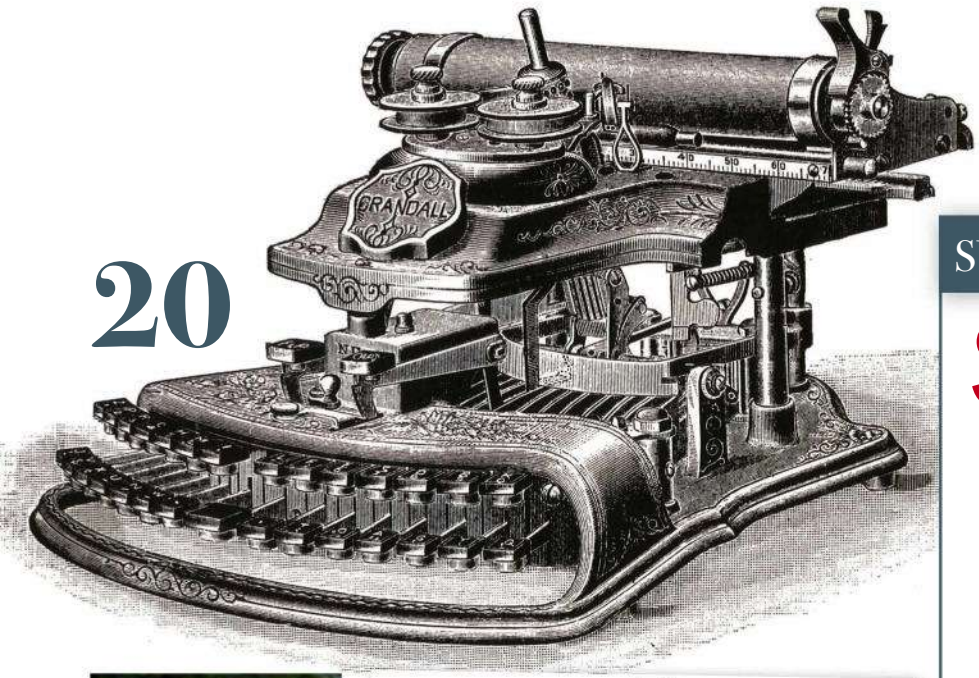

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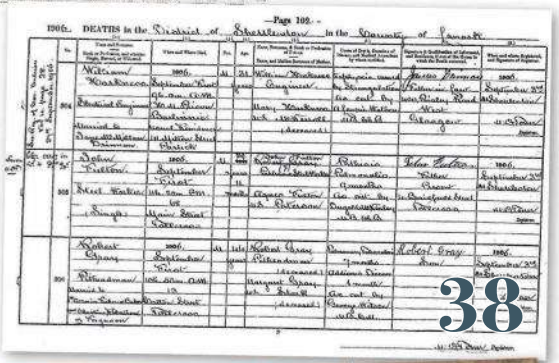

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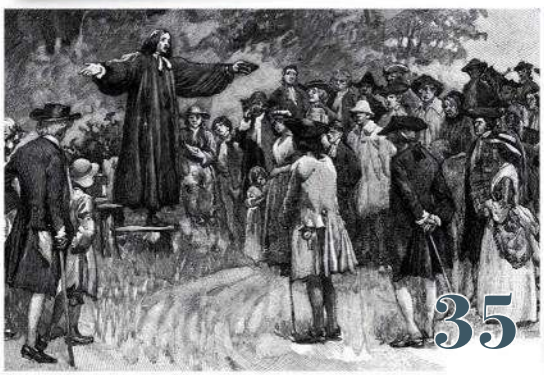

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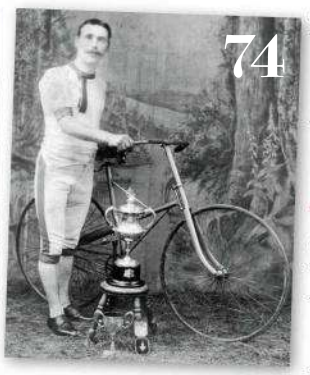

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Write to *WDYTYA? Magazine*, Eagle House, Bristol BS1 4ST

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The writer of our star letter wins an AncestryDNA test **worth £79** – so drop us a line and share your thoughts with us.

Vicky McClure Connection

My name is Dale Millership, and I've been looking into my family tree for about a year now. It was amazing to see another Millership (Harry) on actor Vicky McClure's episode of *Who Do You Think You Are?*, and such an emotional journey for Vicky to see where Harry died in the war.

I decided to check my records to see if Harry was a distant relative of mine, and I couldn't believe my eyes when I checked my family tree. Harry was the older brother of my grandad Harold. Harold was the youngest of the children, some 15 years younger than Harry. There was a story in the family my gran used to tell me that one of my dad's uncles was killed by the Japanese in the war when they pushed him down a mine shaft for standing up to a guard, or so the story went. But that's not how they recorded his death on the certificate.

Harold was a miner throughout the war and never fought. They had another brother who was killed on the last day of the war in a car crash I think.

If you are allowed to share any more information you have I would be very grateful. Equally if it's possible to pass on a message to Vicky that would be great too. Just to say that there are more of us Millerships out here.

Dale Millership, by email

In the first episode of the latest series of *Who Do You Think You Are?* Vicky McClure explored her family history, and learnt about her great grandfather Harry Millership's experiences in the Second World War

Editor Replies That must have made the episode doubly interesting for you. I hope you also enjoyed the article on the Taiwan camps in our September issue. I'm afraid we can't share the research, but you could try reaching out to Vicky via social media.

Public Inconvenience

Further to Bob Shaw's letter in your September issue, it is a pity that he feels it necessary to keep his tree private. A well-sourced public tree can be very valuable to other researchers. However thorough we are, we may still have errors or mistaken assumptions and a public tree may invite helpful corrections. I have both public and private trees, with the latter used where I am not yet sure enough of the accuracy and would not want people to copy my errors.

It can be particularly frustrating when a DNA match has no public tree and, despite your efforts, you end up thinking, "Who is that person that seems to be so closely related to me?"

I certainly agree with him about the proliferation of unsourced errors. I fear there is little we can do but continue to point out the errors and to ensure our own trees are as accurate as we can make them. It is annoying when we get no reply to our attempts to help – sometimes my messages have not even been read, though the recipient has been online since I sent them. However, when a friendly reply thanking us for our help is received it makes our efforts worthwhile.

FamilySearch (**familysearch.org**) like other family history sites does have many errors, but also some useful content. It is up to us to evaluate all of the information received, and to confirm its accuracy by our own research.

David Joy, Huntingdon

Editor Replies I agree David, public trees have their uses.

Shared Photograph Frustration

It may be frustrating when people ignore others pointing out errors in their online family tree, but it is distressing when they won't remove photographs of your relative attached to a stranger.

A few years back I was contacted by someone distantly related to me via Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**). I sent them two photographs via their email address, and asked them not to share them outside the family. Unfortunately, they attached them to our common ancestor on their public tree. Now I keep seeing my great great grandparents' photos attached to strangers with similar names but totally different spouses and birthdates, who were even born in a different country.

Despite contacting them to point out their error, making it clear I own the original printed photographs, my request is nearly always ignored. As time passes more and more people will attach

these photos to the wrong people as the error spreads like a virus. I find it very upsetting that I cannot stop them. Please warn people of the dangers associated with making your tree public.
Cath Palk, by email

Editor Replies **It can be harder to verify a photograph than a record, so it definitely makes sense to check the provenance before copying a photograph from someone's tree.**

Connecting Through Public Trees

Having read in the September issue about readers' encounters with faulty online trees, I thought I would share my experience as a user of Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**). Most of the time I ignore other people's trees, but two years ago I had one pop up that I couldn't ignore because I knew the owner of the tree. We had both attended the same church in Essex 25 year ago.

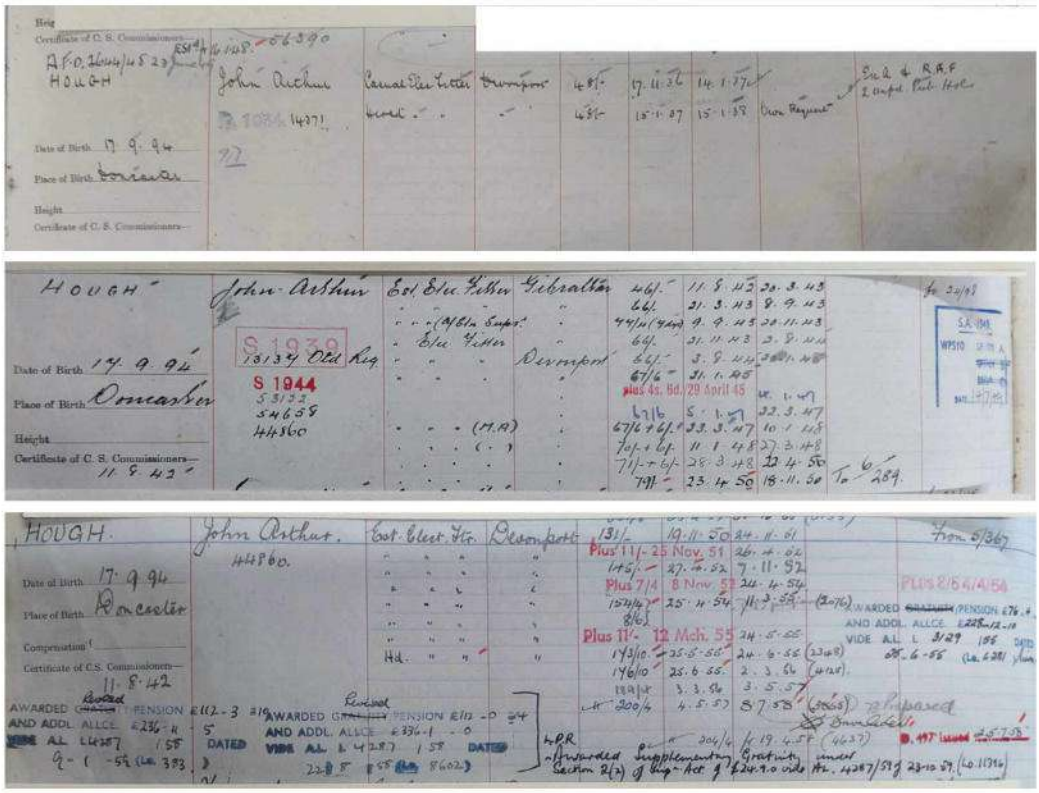
When I followed the link to his tree, I was able to see that his wife's 4x great grandmother in Sussex was in fact my husband's 4x great grandmother. My husband had known the tree owner's wife, sister and parents for over 50 years with no inkling that they were related.

Ancestry's hints have also suggested that my husband and my brother's partner are related, but we are yet to find the common link there.
Jane Holden, by email

Editor Replies **I love it when people find such unexpected connections. It is one of the reasons I keep my tree public.**

Dockyard Records

In the 'Reader Story' in your July issue, David Hough movingly described his grandfather's experiences in two world wars, and how he obtained work in Devonport Dockyard in 1936. The Devonport Naval Heritage Centre (**https://devonportnhc.wordpress.com/**) is a museum and archive wholly staffed by volunteers, and tells the history of the dockyard from its founding in 1690. Our collection includes employee records from the mid-19th century until the 1960s.



Paul shared these images of Devonport Dockyard employee records featuring John Arthur Hough

Carol Hood enjoyed actor Rose Ayling-Ellis' episode
Absolutely loved Rose's episode. So nice to find out about ancestors that you know nothing about, and what a strong character her 3x great grandmother was.

On reading David's story I found his grandfather's record. His first day of work as a casual electrical fitter was 17 November 1936 at the rate of pay of 48/- per week. We next have a record for him in Gibraltar Dockyard as an established (ie permanent) electrical fitter on 11 August 1942, returning to Devonport on 3 August 1944 with his pay being 66/-. On 19 April 1958 he retired on pension. I have included images of these entries for you to pass on to David.
Paul Burkhalter, DNHC volunteer researcher, Plymouth

Editor Replies **Thank you for sharing these records with us Paul – we have sent them on to David. The Devonport Naval Heritage Centre looks like a great place to visit.**

Bedfordshire Tip

In your September issue Jonathan Scott's 'Around Britain' article highlighted Bedfordshire. I fully endorse the sentiment, "Compared with some English counties, not all that much parish material for Bedfordshire is available through commercial websites." My mother's family all hail from Bedfordshire and, living in West Sussex, I make regular visits to the archives in Bedford where the staff have always been very helpful.

One resource I find useful is the Internet Archive (**archive.org**), which holds many transcriptions of Bedfordshire parish registers up to 1812. It is not a complete set, but does enable initial research to be done for those parishes before venturing further.
David Parker, by email

Editor Replies **Thanks for the tip David. I think that the Internet Archive is a much-underused resource for family historians – and it's completely free as well.**

Scottish Brick Walls

As a Scot, I have carried out most of my research through ScotlandsPeople (**scotlandspeople.gov.uk**), with a back-up from Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**). I have managed to go back to my 3x great grandfather. As you know, Scottish civil records are a wonderful tool, due to the extra information contained in the certificates. However, I am now at the point before civil registration and the census had commenced, and I have to interrogate parish records for births, marriages and deaths. Unfortunately I find the Old Parish Registers a bit of a nightmare. I have three relatives for whom I have been unable to obtain any record of their births, marriages or deaths. I have tried every possible combination in respect of names and possible dates of birth, without success.

It is with regret that I feel I may be 'at the end of the road'. Are there any pointers you can offer to enable me to continue this fascinating experience?

I would also like to say how much I wish my parents

Maggie emailed us this photograph depicting her late husband's grandfather Ernest Arthur Witherick in chef's whites

had spoken to me about my relatives. However, I'm 83 years old and in my generation people didn't tend to pass on this sort of information to their children.

Also, I have a very large box of photographs which I inherited from my parents. In most cases, I am at a loss to know who has been captured in these photographs. I will make sure that I annotate on the back of my photographs, or my children will be in the same position.
Anne Trevains, by email

Editor Replies If you know where your family lived, I'm a big fan of the kirk-session records in ScotlandsPeople's 'virtual volumes', and they are free to search. Bills for "mort cloths" or "proclamations" in the accounts will point to a burial or marriage.

Alternatively, you can email your brick walls and photo queries to our 'Q&A' section via *wdytya questions@ourmedia.co.uk*.

Super Issue

Since I became a subscriber to your magazine in 2016, I have always found some articles of enduring interest, so have made an index to help find my way back to them later, usually noting four to six features. But after reading the celebratory September issue, I made a list three times as long! And Vicky McClure was a very good start to this year's TV series. Congratulations and thank you.
Wilfred Newman, by email

Editor Replies Well thank you, Wilfred! We are delighted that you enjoyed the issue so much.

@mrskmob1 shared a comment about Olympian Dame Jessica Ennis-Hill's *WDYTYA?* episode
Don't think dad is going to leave Jamaica. He looks so relaxed and at home with his family. Another great episode.

Cooking Connection

I am responding to Linda Elliott's question about Ernest Arthur Witherick ('Q&A', July). He was my late husband Allan's grandfather, and I attach the only photograph of him that I could find. It says "Greyhound" on the back, which I assume was a hotel or restaurant in South London.

Allan's father Francis William worked as a chef for Ring and Brymer, outside caterers in the City of London. Allan too worked for them and ended up as executive chef, before leaving to start Feldon House, our own restaurant with rooms in Brailes. I am the Maggie Witherick mentioned in Phil Tomaselli's answer, and I did indeed cook for Edward Heath on his train journey around the UK publicising his book *Travels*. It was fascinating to read about Allan's grandfather.
Maggie Witherick, by email

Editor Replies Thank you for sharing this photo Maggie. We have passed it on to Linda, who was delighted to receive it.

YOUR LETTER IN PRINT We reserve the right to edit any letters sent to the magazine. Messages posted to our Facebook wall and tweets sent to us may also appear in print. The choice of Star Letter is the editor's and the prize is subject to change.

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Editorial
Editor Sarah Williams
Production editor Seth Burgess
Features editor Rosemary Collins
Art editor Robbie Bennie
Contributor Sue Gent

Advertising Sales
Advertising manager Andy Williams
0117 300 8803
Brand sales executive Harry Jorden
0117 300 8114
Inserts Laurence Robertson
00 353 876 902208

Marketing
Head of loyalty, CRM and retention
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What's On

Email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk* to feature your event here for free

PICK OF THE MONTH

Huddersfield & District Family History Society's fair returns in October

Family & Local History Fair

26 October

a Greenhead Masonic Hall, Huddersfield
t 01484 859229
w **hdfhs.org.uk/the-family-history-fair/**

Attendees at one of the society's previous events

Huddersfield & District Family History Society promises that its latest event will offer something for everyone interested in family history, no matter their level of experience. There will be three talks: 'Fighting the Flames – A History of Huddersfield Fire Brigades' by Chris Smith, 'King George V and Queen Mary's Visit to the West Riding' by Christine Leveridge, and 'From Hanging Heaton to New York' by Jim Halstead. Members of the society will be on hand to help with research queries, and its transcribed record booklets and CDs will on sale. There will also be stalls from local and family history societies and other organisations. £5.

IN PERSON

City Of Rivers

Until 3 November

a Weston Park Museum, Sheffield
w **sheffieldmuseums.org.uk/whats-on/city-of-rivers/**

This exhibition reveals the history of Sheffield's relationship with its rivers through stories, objects, artwork, film and photos. Free.

The Life Of John Smythe QC, MBE (Mil) OBE

10 October

a International Bomber Command Centre, Lincoln
t 01522 514755
w **tinyurl.com/ibcc-smythe**

This lecture will explore the life of John Smythe, who was born in Sierra Leone, served as a Bomber Command navigator, and went on to become the attorney general of Sierra Leone. £15.25.

Doncaster And District Family History Society Fair

12 October

a C-view (the old Art College), Church Walk, Doncaster
e *webadmin@doncasterfhs.co.uk*
w **doncasterfhs.co.uk/ddfhs-fair/**

There will be two talks at the fair – 'The History of Hyde Park Cemetery' by Helen Slade, and 'The Falklands War' by Chris Tapster – plus a raffle. £1.

Necropolis Women's Heritage Walk

19 October

a Glasgow Necropolis
t 0141 550 2267
w **tinyurl.com/glas-womens-lib-necropolis**

Find out more about the notorious and forgotten women buried in the Necropolis with this Glasgow Women's Library event. From £6.

Suffolk Family History Society Fair

19 October

a The Hold, Ipswich
e *ipswichchairman@suffolkfhs.org.uk*
w **suffolkfhs.co.uk/index.php/pages/view/society-fair**

This fair features three talks on topics including the 1830 Swing Riots and how to research agricultural labourers, together with displays and stalls from family history organisations. Free.

Death, Dirt And Disease In 19th Century Leeds

24 October

a Abbey House Museum, Leeds
t 0113 535 2219
w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-death-dirt**

At this study afternoon you can learn about mourning and medical care in Victorian Leeds through the Abbey House Museum's collections. £12 – entry to the museum is included in the ticket price.

OFHS Family History Fair

26 October

a Cherwell School, Oxford
t 01865 358151
w **tinyurl.com/ofhs-2024-fair**

Oxfordshire Family History Society's annual fair includes the opportunity to discuss your family history queries with experts from the society and the Oxfordshire History Centre. Free.

Getting About In Victorian London

1 November

a The London Archives
t 020 7332 3820
w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-tla-getting-about**

Discover how Victorians made their way around the capital. £5.

ONLINE

Pharos Tutors

Various dates

w **pharostutors.com**

Pharos Tutors' four-week course 'Professional Genealogist – Become One, Become a Better One' with Karen Cummings starts on 14 October, while 'Manorial Records For Family and Local Historians' with Caroline Adams begins on 21 October and runs for five weeks. Various prices.

Society Of Genealogists

Various dates

w **members.sog.org.uk/events**

Upcoming one-hour talks include 'Black British Family History Research with Penny Walters' (10 October) and 'Coalminer Ancestors with Jill Clapham' (17 October). Various prices.

Tracing Your Nonconformist Ancestors With Liz Yule

10 October

w **tinyurl.com/ihgs-yule**

This talk has been organised by the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies. £10.

Victorian Workhouses Workshop

12 October

w **tinyurl.com/berks-vww**

Join this Berkshire Family History Society event to learn more about Victorian workhouses. £10.

BOOK AHEAD

Find out more about genetic genealogy from a true expert

Professor Turi King

11 November

a St George's Bristol
t 0117 929 4929
w **stgeorgesbristol.co.uk/whats-on/professor-turi-king/**

Prof Turi King is famous for leading the genetic analysis of Richard III's recovered remains, and co-presenting BBC Two's *DNA Family Secrets* with Stacey Dooley. In this talk, she explains how DNA testing has revolutionised genealogy and forensics. From £23.

News

Rosemary Collins reports on data releases and genealogy news

Findmypast adds over 70,000 Royal Society of Arts records

Family history website Findmypast (findmypast.co.uk) has released 72,873 records from the early years of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA; thersa.org).

The record set consists of the RSA's first eight subscription books and first five minute books. They date from the society's founding in 1754 until 1856.

The society, which still exists today, was originally known as the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. It was founded in a London coffee house called Rawthmell's by William Shipley, a drawing master and social reformer from Northampton.

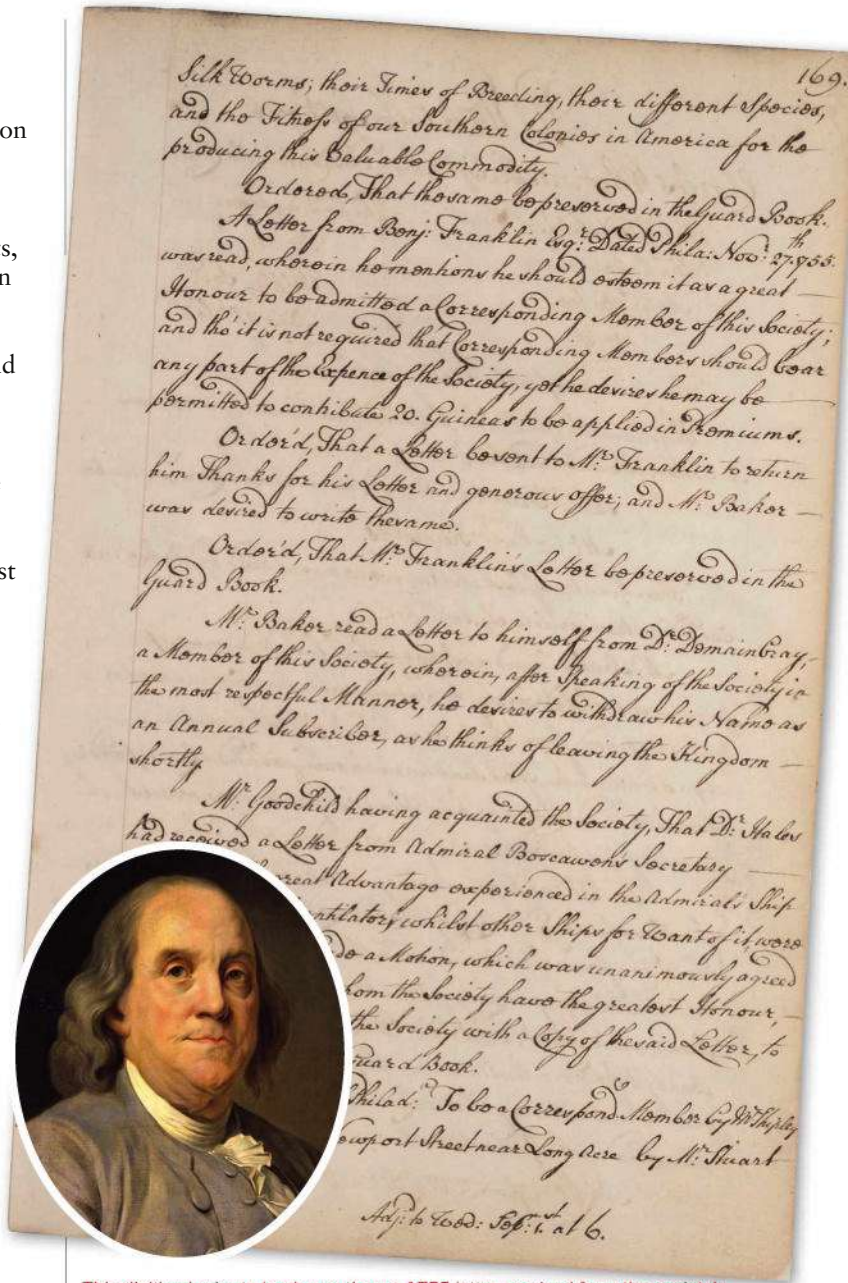
The aim of the RSA was to foster progress in the arts and industry through a competition known as the Premium Award Scheme, which was funded by contributions from public-spirited individuals. The first three premiums that were offered focused on the cultivation of madder and the discovery of cobalt – both used as dyes – plus recognising artistic talent in children under 14 years old.

The scheme remained the RSA's primary focus for its first century. However, in 1850 Sir Henry Cole, a civil servant and inventor, redirected the society's efforts. This led to the planning and execution of the hugely successful 1851 Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, London, overseen by Cole, engineer and naval architect John Scott Russell, and Prince Albert, who became the RSA's president in 1843 and held the position until his death in 1861. During this period, lectures became a key component of the society's activities. It also published its first *Journal* in 1852 and established its first examinations in 1856, leading to what is now known as the OCR examination board (standing for Oxford, Cambridge and RSA). Subsequent initiatives included the Blue Plaque scheme (1866) celebrating local heritage, and filling the empty fourth plinth in London's Trafalgar Square (1995).

The digitised collection includes searchable transcripts of the records and images of the original documents. They reveal details such as the name of the member, their address, the individual who proposed them for membership, the date of their joining, and the date of their leaving or death.

Many historically significant people who joined the RSA can be found in the records, including artist William Hogarth (1697–1764), novelist Charles Dickens (1812–1870) and US statesman and polymath Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790), who attended meetings in person during his time living in London.

Unusually, women were allowed to join the society from the beginning. The first recorded female members, listed in 1755, were Miss Elizabeth Vaughan and Lady Elizabeth 'Betty' Germain (1680–1769), daughter of the Earl of Berkeley. In 1758 Mrs Elizabeth Montague (1718–1800), author and leading member of the Blue Stockings Society, also joined the RSA, although her name is recorded as "Mountague".



This digitised minute book mentions a 1755 letter received from the society's corresponding member "Benj. Franklin Esq." *(inset)* of Philadelphia

GETTY IMAGES

NEWS IN BRIEF

MesAieux has been bought by MyHeritage

Canadian genealogy site bought by MyHeritage

MyHeritage (**myheritage.com**), one of the biggest family history websites in the world, has acquired Quebec-based genealogy website MesAieux.com (**mesaieux.com**). MesAieux, which was founded in 2004, has more than one million users, and specialises in French-Canadian genealogy. The site includes an online family tree builder with automated features, and some 15 million records from Canada, primarily Quebec, and several exclusive collections. All of the records on MesAieux will soon be made available on MyHeritage.

British expats – and their pet (big) cat – in Secunderabad, near Hyderabad, 1906

FIBIS creates DNA project for British Indian research

The Families in British India Society (FIBIS; **fibis.org**) has created an Ancestors Project on GEDmatch (**gedmatch.com**), a DNA comparison and analysis website. You can upload your DNA test results to the site's database to be matched with others. This enables family historians to meet people who are researching the same forebear, surname or geographic area. For full details, see **fibis.org/british-india-ancestors-gedmatch-project/**.

Highland Archive Service secures major award

Rachael Muir, Richard Aitken (for the Highland Archive Service), James Ranahan and Tom Bennett, with *(far left and right)* ARA president Aideen Ireland and chair Andrew Nicoll

The Highland Archive Service (highlifehighland.com/archives-service/) has won the 2024 Record Keeping Service of the Year Award, one of the Archives and Records Association's (ARA's; archives.org.uk) four 2024 Excellence Awards.

The awards were announced during the gala dinner at the ARA's annual conference, held at the Birmingham Conference & Events Centre on 29 August.

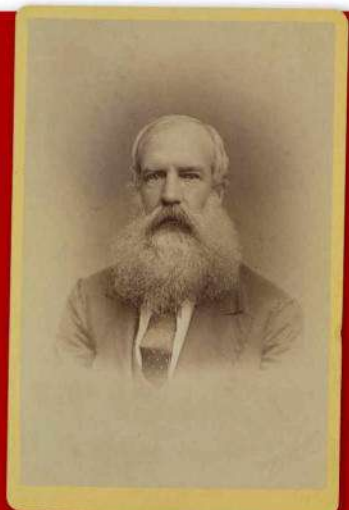
Michael Golding, chair of the High Life Highland board, said, "We are all delighted at High Life Highland to see our own Highland Archive Service winning such a prestigious award. This is very well deserved."

Rachael Muir, business archives surveying officer for Scotland, won the ARA's Record Keeper of the Year Award, while the award for New Professional of the Year was divided between Tom Bennett, for his roles as historic archives and collections officer at George Watson's College in Edinburgh, co-convenor of the Scottish and Northern England School Archives Group, and committee member for the School Archives and Records Association, and Nicole Hartland, digital archivist at the House of Lords.

In addition, James Ranahan, archivist at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, won the Distinguished Service Award.

CAN YOU HELP?

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) is asking members of the public to help identify 16 Victorian *cartes de visite*, or calling cards – a popular photographic format in the 19th century. They consisted of a portrait mounted on a small card, and people displayed friends' calling cards in their homes. The RHS has published the set of unidentified cards from its collections at **collections.rhs.org.uk/browse/collection/194517**. If you can identify any of the depicted men, please email *libraryenquirieslondon@rhs.org.uk*. The RHS has also published a larger collection of 756 cards where the subject's identity is known, including famous Victorian figures as well as ordinary people who worked in horticulture. These can be seen at **tinyurl.com/rhs-cartes-named**.



Please get in touch with the RHS if you can identify the man in this photograph

GETTY IMAGES / SIMON O'CONNOR/ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ASSOCIATION

One of the photos being digitised

Coventry University to digitise Indian collection

Coventry University (www.coventry.ac.uk) has announced that it is going to digitise over 20,000 images, prints and documents spanning the two decades following India's independence and partition in 1947.

The collection is part of a larger archive held at Hamilton Studios, a photographic studio in Mumbai.

It includes passport photographs of ordinary Indians, as well as glass and celluloid negatives, test prints, invoices, legal documents and products for advertisement.

As well as migration narratives, the project promises to uncover a diverse range of stories, including weddings and celebrations.

Ben Kyneswood, associate professor of digital heritage and culture at Coventry University's Research Centre for Creative Economies, will carry out the project in partnership with Hamilton Studios and the National Institute for Design (NID) in Ahmedabad.

It is funded by the Modern Endangered Archives Program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Interns from Mumbai colleges and graduate students from the NID will participate in the digitisation programme, and create stories and exhibitions inspired by the material in the archive.

Newspapers.com passes one billion pages milestone

More than one billion historic newspaper pages are now available at Newspapers.com (**newspapers.com**), following a recent update.

Newspapers.com has more newspapers for researchers than ever before

The subscription website, which launched in 2012, is the world's largest online newspaper archive, holding titles from countries including the UK, the USA, Canada and Australia, dating as far back as 1690. The site is owned by Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), so is also available to Ancestry members who have an 'All-Access' subscription. Gordon Atkinson, vice president of family history verticals and Newspapers.com at Ancestry, commented, "This is our biggest milestone to date."

The Museum of the City of New York

The institution has digitised a set of records relating to the manumission of enslaved people in New York between 1785 and 1809 (**tinyurl.com/smithsonian-mag-ny-manu**)

117 years old

The verified age of Maria Branyas Morera, believed to be the oldest person in the world, when she died on 19 August (**tinyurl.com/guardian-morera**)

4.6m

The number of views of a TikTok by American Lindsay Bullis sharing a photo of her 4x great grandmother, described as her "long lost twin" (**tinyurl.com/mirror-bullis**)

1,100 lb

The weight of a German bomb dropped on Newtownards, County Down, 83 years ago. The device was discovered in August, and detonated safely (**tinyurl.com/guardian-newt**)

Some of the donated documents

Historic documents donated to University of Nottingham

Historic documents that were discovered in a Nottinghamshire village have been donated to the Manuscripts and Special Collections department at the University of Nottingham (nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/).

The set of approximately 250 documents was discovered in a chest at Broughton House, a farmhouse in Upper Broughton, by a local family.

They were donated to the Upper Broughton History Group (**https://upperbroughton.org.uk/history/**), which has now given them to the university.

Kathryn Steenson, senior archivist at the department, told *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*, "Most of the documents are from the 18th or 19th century, but some go back as far as the early 1600s. The types of documents are mostly relating to land transactions – leases, mortgages, conveyances, etc. There are also copies of wills/probate and marriage settlements, where people have had to show their entitlement to certain rights or properties."

Researchers at the university will continue work started by the Upper Broughton History Group to learn about the documents and extract key information such as their dates and the names of individuals.

COVENTRY UNIVERSITY / UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

Casualties Of The King

Alan Crosby reveals how the monasteries' dissolution may have affected your family

While I was leading a history study tour in North Yorkshire in July, we visited three medieval monastic sites, each fascinating although they were very different – Whitby Abbey's gaunt ruins high on a windy headland above the town and the North Sea; Kirkham Priory slumbering beside the River Derwent near Malton; and the magnificence of Rievaulx in its wooded valley, its golden stone glowing in the sunlight. There were many hundreds of monastic houses in medieval Britain, all of them suppressed and closed by Henry VIII and his government in the late 1530s.

Among the questions that I'm often asked when we're visiting them is, "How many monks were there here?" The answer is, "Far fewer than most people expect." Even Rievaulx, one of the largest abbeys in the country, only had about 160 monks at its peak. Most other monastic sites were much smaller. In just about every case the monks were far outnumbered by the lay-brothers – the servants who looked after the buildings and grounds, waited at table, tended the livestock and farms, and were essential to the running of the establishment. Britain had about 12,000 monks and nuns in the 16th century, and perhaps 35,000 lay-brethren.

Britain had about 12,000 monks and nuns in the 16th century

Where did these people come from? Linking them accurately to our own ancestral lines is rarely possible, unless we're lucky enough to have pre-1540 wills relating to our forebears. From time to time these mention men and women who were in monasteries, but other than that it is a real challenge – and of course technically none of us should be descended from a monk or nun!

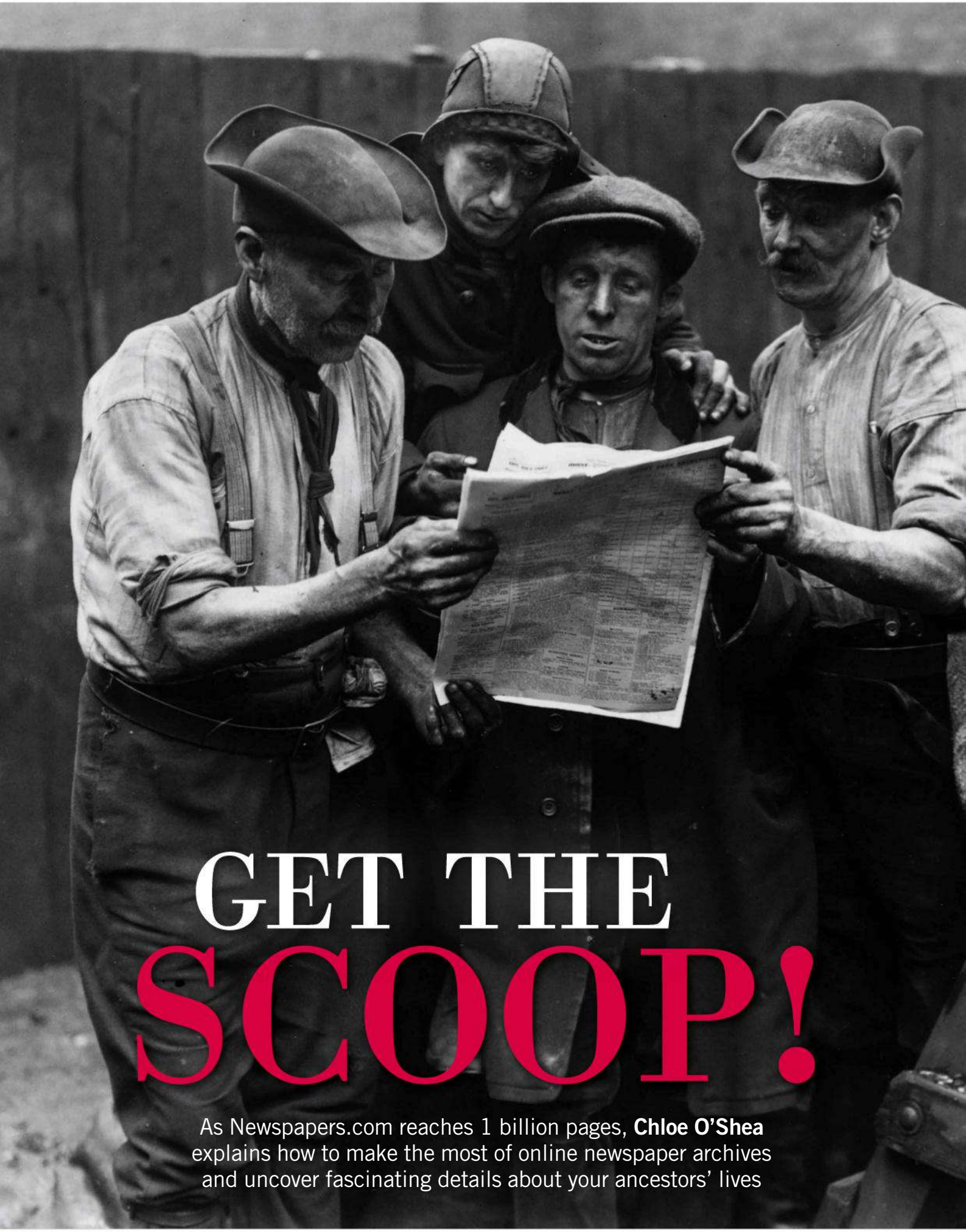
However, a lot of information survives (at least from the 1530s) to give us the surnames of monks in certain monastic houses, so we can ascertain which family they belonged to. For example, at Cartmel Priory in south Cumbria in 1536 there were 10 monks, all of whose names and ages are recorded. The oldest was William Pannell (68) and the youngest Thomas Pearson and John Cowper, both of whom were 25. Cockersand Abbey, 10 miles south of Lancaster, had 22 monks, whose surnames reveal something very interesting. Among them were men called Poulton, Aldcliffe, Claughton, Betham, Preston, Kirkland, Garstang, Dalton, Burton, Whalley, Furness, Forton, Bentham, Downham, Plumpton, Salley, Catterall, Clitheroe, Kellett and Lancaster. These are all places within a 20-mile radius of the abbey, and confirm that it drew almost all of its brethren from the surrounding areas.

This means that the monks came as very young men or boys from local families. They were probably the younger sons of minor landowners or yeomen farmers. Their families must have been so proud of them (I imagine a mother saying "My younger boy's done very well – he's a monk at Cockersand"), and they must also have felt an attachment to the monastery itself. In the late 1530s, when it was swept away during the wholesale religious changes under Henry VIII, there would have been much great sadness and some fierce anger… but all to no avail. The power of the Government overcame the local rebellions against the dissolution of the monasteries, such as the 'Pilgrimage of Grace' which swept across the north of England in 1536–1537.

Not every monastery had such a preponderance of local men. In the south of England the wealthier religious houses often took much higher-ranking youngsters, who came from further afield, so had fewer close family ties with the surrounding community. And from Anglo-Saxon times to the 1530s it was commonplace for girls from aristocratic families, or even the royal family itself, to become nuns. But I think instead of those smaller, less prestigious institutions, with monks who spoke the local dialect, and I wonder if – were the records there – I'd have any of them on my family tree.

ALAN CROSBY lives in Lancashire and is the editor of *The Local Historian*

ILLUSTRATION WWW.SUEGENT.COM



GET THE SCOOP!

As Newspapers.com reaches 1 billion pages, **Chloe O'Shea** explains how to make the most of online newspaper archives and uncover fascinating details about your ancestors' lives

Striking British workers read the latest news during the General Strike of May 1926

GETTY IMAGES

Britain's newspaper industry started in the 17th century. The first official British newspaper made its debut in 1622 when the *Weekly News* launched in London. The London *Gazette* was published from 1665, initially as the Oxford *Gazette*, while the first daily newspaper, the *Daily Courant*, began in 1702. At this time newspapers were not overly popular due to high levels of illiteracy. However, the arrival of mass production in the 18th century followed by improved literacy in the 19th century saw the industry grow dramatically. This was boosted by the abolishment of stamp duty on newspapers in 1855. It is therefore from this time that you are more likely to find your ancestor mentioned in an article.

There are a wide range of reasons why your forebear might be named in a newspaper. A good starting place is the "Births, Marriages and Deaths" column. Initially this was used by wealthier members of society to inform readers of their family updates, but the idea soon spread throughout the population. As well as discovering the dates of these life events, you may also discover extra details such as the location it occurred, a person's occupation, a multiple birth or a cause of death. In addition, the column is especially helpful to fill in gaps prior to the commencement of civil registration in England and Wales in 1837, and in Scotland in 1855.

Local papers often published longer marriage notices outside of the "Births, Marriages and Deaths" column. These can give genealogical information such as the names of the bride and groom's parents, bridesmaids and best man. Beautiful detail is sometimes given including the flowers that were chosen, hymns that were sung, a description of the wedding dress and the location of the couple's honeymoon. Milestone wedding anniversaries were featured too.

The Great And The Good

Obituaries usually focus on notable members of the local population – not just the wealthiest and most influential, but also those who were known for their charity work or who lived to an advanced age. My ancestor Eleanor Marshall (née Shaw) of Longdon, Staffordshire, had her obituary published in the *Lichfield Mercury* after she died at the age of 94. Such articles can include details of a person's life that you may have previously been unaware of. In Eleanor's case the name and occupation of her father is given, along with the

TOP TIP!

A stillbirth might be announced in a "Births, Marriages and Deaths" column, and can explain a gap in a couple's children's birth years. The child's sex was usually given, alongside the word "stillborn".

A London *Gazette* from 1674 plus the second edition of the *Daily Courant*, the first daily newspaper in Britain, from 12 March 1702

details of her second husband and how many of their children had outlived her. As with the marriage announcements, it is the more personal mentions that provide the most interest. Eleanor is stated to have been known locally as "Granny Marshall" who was a "true lover of the country" and "frequently took long walks in the fields".

A common reason to discover your relation in a newspaper is their involvement in criminal activity. This may be as the accused, a victim or a witness. The severity of the crime will influence the amount of information you can discover about it. For example, a murder or manslaughter case is likely to be found in multiple papers with a good amount of detail provided, but a lower-level accusation will give much less information. In all cases you may be able to read what your ancestor said in court: a rare chance to 'hear' their voice. The verdict is usually given at the end of the piece, perhaps stating that your forebear served a prison sentence or received a fine, or was found not guilty. These articles are also of relevance if your forebear worked as a court professional. My husband's ancestor worked as a justice of the peace (JP), and it is interesting to see how he ruled on certain cases.

If your relation was involved in an accident then they may also be named, even if this was fairly minor. Accidents involving falls from height, crushing, fire and drowning are all common discoveries. If the incident resulted in a fatality, you may find that an inquest took place. Articles about coroners' inquests can be vital, because the original reports have often been destroyed. The article should explain what happened, and who was at fault.

WATCH OUT!

You will likely need to view a variety of websites to see all of the articles relevant to your ancestors, particularly if they lived overseas. Fortunately many sites have free trial periods.

PRETTY WEDDING AT ST. STEPHEN'S

The bridal party after the marriage of Mr. W. N. Astman and Miss Aileen Robbins.

You may find a photograph of your forebear's wedding in a local newspaper – or their obituary

BRITISH LIBRARY

Awards And Promotions

You may find official notifications regarding your ancestor, particularly if they were awarded a military medal or held a position of authority. Notices of promotion and awards can help you learn about their professional life. You can also use newspapers to discover more about other forebears' working lives. You can use any search term when searching online newspaper archives so instead of using a person's name, search by the name or address of their workplace.

Similarly, if you are interested in researching house history you can use online searches to trace articles mentioning a particular address. This can reveal interesting events that happened within the property and to the residents who lived there.

There are numerous other miscellaneous mentions you may find in the papers. A husband

Overseas Newspapers Trace your migrant ancestors

INTERNET ARCHIVE
w **archive.org/details/newspapers**
The Internet Archive has free titles from around the world including the Netherlands, Australia, Italy and Japan.

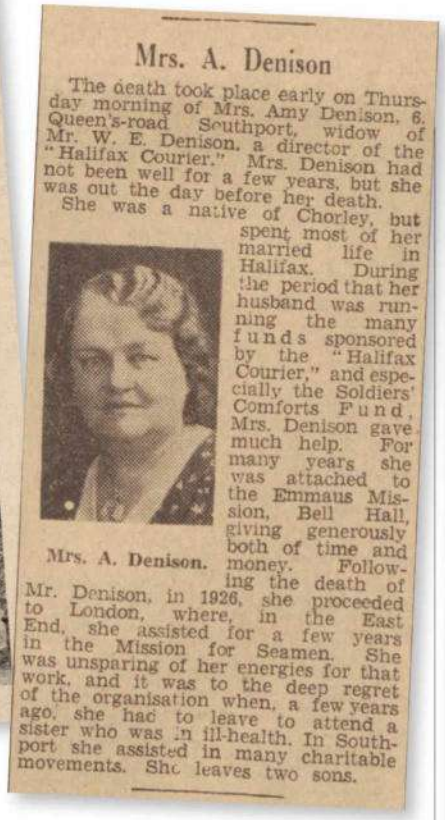
CANADIANA
w **canadiana.ca/collection-serials**
This free resource includes more than 300 Canadian newspapers. You can search by title, language and date.

JAMAICA GLEANER
w **gleaner.newspaperarchive.com**
The *Gleaner* was founded in 1834, and is still published. You can view its archive at this subscription website.

PAPERS PAST
w **paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers**
Part of the National Library of New Zealand, the free website Papers Past provides titles from 1839–1989.

CHRONICLING AMERICA
w **www.loc.gov/collections/chronicling-america/about-this-collection/**
A recent revamp has made this collection of free US newspapers even easier to use.

TROVE
w **trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper**
This National Library of Australia site provides free access to Australia's papers – search by specific text or state, date or newspaper title.



Mrs. A. Denison

The death took place early on Thursday morning of Mrs. Amy Denison, 6, Queen's-road, Southport, widow of Mr. W. E. Denison, a director of the "Halifax Courier." Mrs. Denison had not been well for a few years, but she was out the day before her death.

She was a native of Chorley, but spent most of her married life in Halifax. During the period that her husband was running the many funds sponsored by the "Halifax Courier," and especially the Soldiers' Comforts Fund, Mrs. Denison gave much help. For many years she was attached to the Emmaus Mission, Bell Hall, giving generously both of time and money. Following the death of Mr. Denison, in 1926, she proceeded to London, where, in the East End, she assisted for a few years in the Mission for Seamen. She was unsparing of her energies for that work, and it was to the deep regret of the organisation when, a few years ago, she had to leave to attend a sister who was in ill-health. In Southport she assisted in many charitable movements. She leaves two sons.

Mrs. A. Denison.

used to be responsible for any debts that were incurred by his wife. This means that if they separated, the husband might place a notice in the paper to state he was not responsible for any debt belonging to her. This covered him financially in the absence of a divorce being granted. Alternatively, you may discover that your forebear placed a notice detailing goods that were stolen from them in the hope that they could be returned. In addition, from the 18th century people began to place adverts in "Lonely Hearts" columns seeking new relationships.

There are also reports on agricultural competitions and village fêtes naming those who won contests, such as flower shows. My grandmother is named in one article because she correctly guessed the weight of a cake at a local village fête in 1932 when she was nine years old.

An interesting communication aimed at local clergy appeared in the *Birmingham Gazette* on 23 June 1788 regarding my ancestors John Shaw and Sarah Marshall. It is stated that John left his family several months earlier to marry Sarah; however, he was "much under the age of twenty-one" and clergy were asked not to marry them. Requests such as these were often unsuccessful, with the couple married in Chester later the same year.

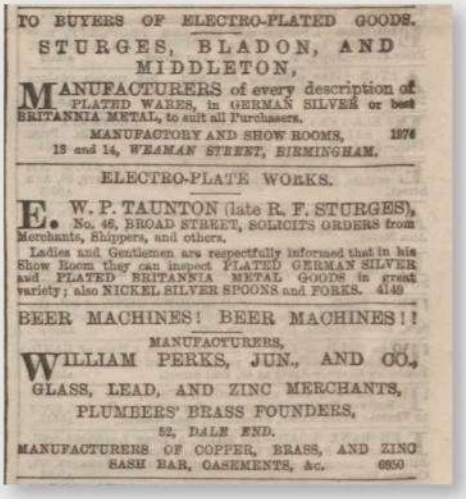
There are many ways to search for your ancestors in digitised online newspapers. Using the websites mentioned in the 'Resources' box, it can be as easy as typing in a person's name and viewing the results. This works best if your relation had an uncommon name. In most cases you will want to filter the search results, such as by date, or by county – although you might miss relevant stories if they appeared in publications outside of your forebear's home county. They may also be mentioned many years after their death. My 4x great grandfather died in 1847, but was named in an article about his grandson in 1934.

Transcription Issues

Unfortunately newspapers have not been transcribed in the same way as most other records. In order to speed up the process, pages are read using a technique known as optical character recognition (OCR) where the words are digitally scanned. While this is a much quicker process than manual transcription, it is not perfect. Letters may be read incorrectly and therefore if you are searching for an exact name, this may not appear in the ▶

Newspaper Advertisements

You can learn about your forebears' employment from adverts



TO BUYERS OF ELECTRO-PLATED GOODS.

STURGES, BLADON, AND MIDDLETON,

MANUFACTURERS of every description of PLATED WARES, in GERMAN SILVER or best BRITANNIA METAL, to suit all Purchasers.

MANUFACTORY AND SHOW ROOMS, 1976
13 and 14, *WEAMAN STREET, BIRMINGHAM.*

ELECTRO-PLATE WORKS.

E. W. P. TAUNTON (late R. F. STURGES), No. 46, BROAD STREET, SOLICITS ORDERS from Merchants, Shippers, and others.

Ladies and Gentlemen are respectfully informed that in his Show Room they can inspect PLATED GERMAN SILVER and PLATED BRITANNIA METAL GOODS in great variety; also NICKEL SILVER SPOONS and FORKS. 4149

BEER MACHINES! BEER MACHINES!!

MANUFACTURERS,

WILLIAM PERKS, JUN., AND CO.,

GLASS, LEAD, AND ZINC MERCHANTS,

PLUMBERS' BRASS FOUNDERS,

52, DALE END.

MANUFACTURERS OF COPPER, BRASS, AND ZINC SASH BAR, CASEMENTS, &c. 6950

Advertisements in newspapers can give you information about a specific ancestor, or a wider view of society in their lifetime. A person may have placed an advert for a housekeeper in the "Wanted" column, or advertised the selling of their property. These can hint at their financial position. Adverts placed in local papers can tell you about your forebear's business, as well as that of their competition. You may discover the type of goods that your relation made, their cost and a work address.

When looking at business adverts, particularly those for larger companies, it is important to remember the change in attitudes since our ancestors' time. You can find claims of health benefits of cigarette smoking, and cleaning products aimed at "housewives only". Promotions for medicinal products that contain very dubious ingredients that we wouldn't see on the shelves today feature heavily, often claiming to cure conditions such as depression and insomnia.

You can also see the changing attitudes in the local adverts placed where people would request that only a person of a specific age and sex could apply. A notice in the *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald* on 18 August 1883 requests a groom and gardener who must be unmarried, and applicants were to provide their age, height and weight. This is not an uncommon find.

This newspaper advert from 1942 encouraged women involved in war work not to neglect their polishing

BRITISH LIBRARY

The front pages of historic newspapers and magazines were often full of advertisements

search results. This is more likely to occur with older titles, published when the typefaces were thicker and harder for a computer to read. You may find that a surname you are searching for is frequently misinterpreted. Common errors include y and g being mixed up, as well as f and t. You can then choose to search for this misspelling to see what results appear. An example from my own family tree is Eggleton being transcribed as "Eyyleton".

Another potential issue when searching for your relation's name is that it may not always be presented in a predictable way. Walter Eli Hatcher may appear under his full name. He may also appear under Walter E Hatcher, WE Hatcher, W Eli Hatcher or Mr Hatcher. His wife may appear as Mrs Hatcher or Mrs Walter Hatcher, rather than by her own first name. This means that for each relation you will need to conduct a number of searches to make sure that you have found all of the relevant articles.

Your relation's name may not always be presented in a predictable way

Positive identification can be tricky when it comes to newspaper articles where often little identifying information is given. This is obviously harder where an ancestor had a common name and lived in a heavily populated area. For example, there were countless John Smiths in Nottingham in 1900, so how can you be sure it is your forebear being reported on?

The identifying details that might be recorded include a person's age, occupation or home address. Other information may also help you to confirm or rule out their appearance. If your John Smith worked as an agricultural labourer and the John Smith in question had an accident in a lace factory then these are unlikely to be the same person. Relationships may also be stated which can help prove an identity, such as a family member being called as a witness in court. You can use the information from an article to see what other information there is about an incident such as criminal and parish records. These additional sources may provide identifying information about the individual.

Search For Local Events

It's well worth searching for reports of local events that may have affected your ancestor, even if they're not personally named in any of the articles. You can do this either by browsing their local newspaper or by searching for the name of their parish or workplace. Articles about localised weather events, fatal accidents and serious crime can tell us what was happening in our forebear's area at the time and the issues that were affecting them.

Military Newspaper Research

Newspapers can reveal vital clues about a relation's military service – and sacrifice

Notices were placed in newspapers regarding soldiers who had deserted, and these usually include a detailed physical description. Soldiers who were killed in action often had their basic details published such as their name, age, regiment and service number, whereas others had a more complete obituary along with their photo. If your ancestor was taken as a prisoner of war, you can often see their name published in a newspaper stating when they were captured, the date they were released and the date that they arrived safely back in the UK. Similarly soldiers reported as wounded or missing would also be noted, including those missing at sea. Also, notices were placed in the local paper informing readers of upcoming training days for the local militia and warning that those who did not attend may be fined or imprisoned.

You can find relevant articles in a local paper, as well as specialised titles such as the *Weekly Casualty List* and *Illustrated War News*. Try researching how battles involving your ancestor were reported at the time. The Battle of the Somme began on 1 July 1916, and was reported two days later in the *Staffordshire Sentinel* as having "magnificent results" but was expected to "last for some days". We now know that the battle was devastating for British troops, and continued until mid-November.

Prisoners Of War

News Of Merseyside Men In The Forces

The following are now prisoners of war in Germany:—

Driver Joseph Irvine, 58th Coy., Royal Engineers, whose home is at 8 Rowland Street, Liverpool. He has two brothers also in the Army

Driver Irvine. Pte. R. Owens.

BRITISH LIBRARY

George V's illness in November 1928 received a lot of newspaper coverage

As a word of warning, it's important to remember that newspaper articles may be factually inaccurate, and sometimes deliberately; for example an obituary might be written in great favour of the deceased, with negative aspects omitted and false information stated. Accurate reports of accounts that had been given in court by the defendant, victim or witness may repeat details that had been concocted as part of an attempt to sway the jury.

TOP TIP!
You may discover a newspaper article reporting an ancestor's funeral. These can tell you who attended and their relationship to the deceased, as well as the place of burial. A short obituary may also be provided.

There are also examples of dates recorded incorrectly in "Births, Marriages and Deaths" columns and, as with almost every source, names are frequently misspelled, and the ages given inaccurate.

Despite these caveats, newspapers can provide details that just cannot be found elsewhere. Where possible, use such information as a first step to finding a corroborating source. This could include searching parish registers to confirm a marriage date, or the 1921 census to prove an employer. Remember too that not all newspapers are yet available online. With more being digitised each week, it is worth revisiting websites regularly to see what else you can discover about your forebears from their appearances in the news.

On the left, Miss Stephanie Lindley, May Queen at Lydgate Lane Endowed School; on the right, Maypole dancing by the school children.

Newspapers often featured photographs of children from May Queens, such as this one from 1912, to scout camp attendees

GETTY IMAGES / BRITISH LIBRARY

CHLOE O'SHEA is a genealogist and the author of *Discover Your Dorset Ancestors* (Family History Partnership, 2022). Find out more at her site **thepastrevealed.co.uk**

Resources

Take your research further

BOOK

Historical Research Using British Newspapers
Denise Bates
Pen & Sword, 2016
This guide describes the growth of the British newspaper industry and explains how you can use them for research, including family history.

WEBSITES

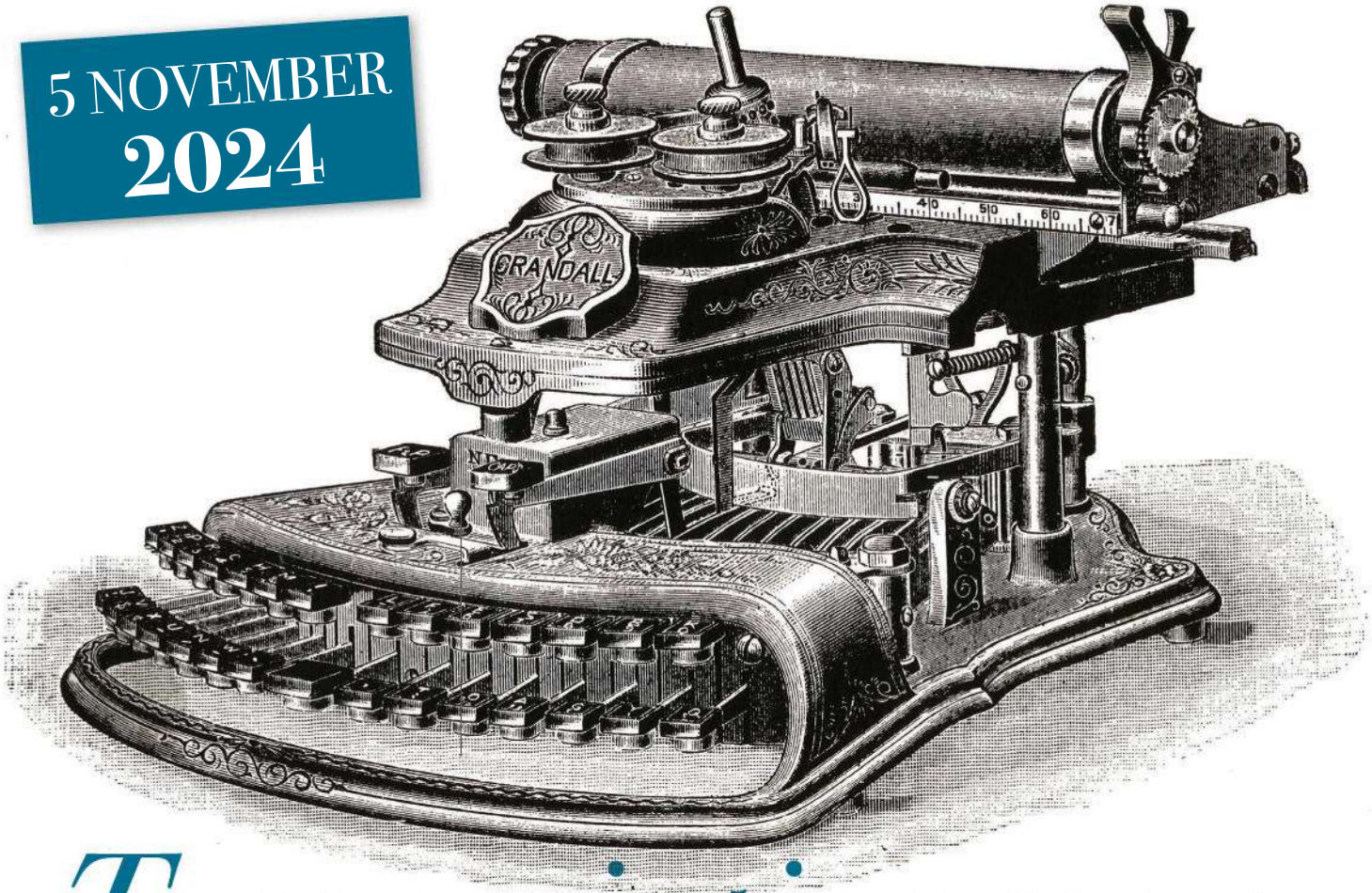
BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE
w **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**
Updated weekly, this website is based on a vast collection held by the British Library, and a great first stop to see if you can find your UK and Irish ancestors. At **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles** you can search the names of the newspapers on the site, or browse by country or keyword. Many of the website's 83 million pages can be viewed for free too, while the whole collection is also available to 'Pro' subscribers to Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**).

NEWSPAPERS.COM
w **newspapers.com**
This subscription website has more than 26,000 newspaper titles and a billion pages from the UK and abroad. British papers date from 1700 to the present day. The collection is also included in the 'All-Access' subscription to Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**).

THE GAZETTE
w **thegazette.co.uk**
The digital archive of the *Gazette* is useful for researching ancestors who received military promotions or medals, or who were declared bankrupt. The published notices date back to 1665.

THE TIMES DIGITAL ARCHIVE
w **thetimes.com/archive**
The archive holds copies of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* dating back to 1785, and is also available via Gale (**gale.com**). Your local library may have a subscription.

5 NOVEMBER 2024



Transcription TUESDAY

Our hugely popular online event returns for 2024! Here **Rosemary Collins** introduces this year's projects, and explains how you can take part

The countdown is on for the return of *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*'s annual volunteer event Transcription Tuesday! This year, it will take place on Tuesday 5 November.

Family history has experienced an exponential growth in popularity in the past couple of decades, as the internet has allowed people to search genealogical records online instead of having to travel across the country to visit archives in person. A crucial part of this is transcribing – deciphering handwritten records and typing up the details, creating digital databases that researchers can easily search for their ancestors. While many records are held on large commercial websites, a lot of vital work is done by volunteers transcribing records online for free.

At *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*, we created Transcription Tuesday so that we could give back to the family history community. Every year, we invite our readers to join us as we team up with selected projects to see how many records we can transcribe in a single day. We've transcribed thousands of documents since we started, covering areas including parish registers, railway workers' accident books, sailors' hospital records, asylum registers and more.

It's fun and challenging, and we always uncover surprising and fascinating stories of ordinary people who have been forgotten. You can take part in Transcription Tuesday from anywhere, as long as you have access to a computer, but you won't be alone – you can share stories and ask for help from other Transcription Tuesday volunteers online!

For Transcription Tuesday 2024, we've chosen two very special projects. As ever, we're teaming up with FamilySearch (**familysearch.org**). This year, the world's largest free family history site wants our help to transcribe Catholic parish registers from Ireland.

We're also partnering with the National Library of Wales (**library.wales**) which is transcribing a fascinating new record set – a petition signed by more than 300,000 Welsh women campaigning for peace after the devastation of the First World War.

Read on to find out more about these projects, and how to get involved. Make sure you're ready to take part on 5 November and have free time in your schedule! On the day itself, we'd love to hear your stories of how you're getting on, and see photographs of you at work. You can get in contact by emailing us on *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*, in our Facebook group (**bit.ly/WDYTYAFBG**) or on X using #TranscriptionTuesday.

For full project instructions, please visit

whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/transcriptiontuesday

FamilySearch

Unlock the precious information held in Irish Catholic parish registers

DIFFICULTY RATING 4

PROJECT OVERVIEW FamilySearch is the world's largest free family history website, with millions of records transcribed by volunteers each year. For 2024, the site is asking Transcription Tuesday participants to help transcribe its sets of Catholic church records from Ireland, including baptism, marriage and burial records, dating from the 18th century through to the 20th. Millions of people around the world have Irish ancestry and many of the country's records were lost, so making more Irish family history records accessible is particularly important.

WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE? You will be asked to transcribe scanned parish records on FamilySearch's site, inputting details such as names and dates.

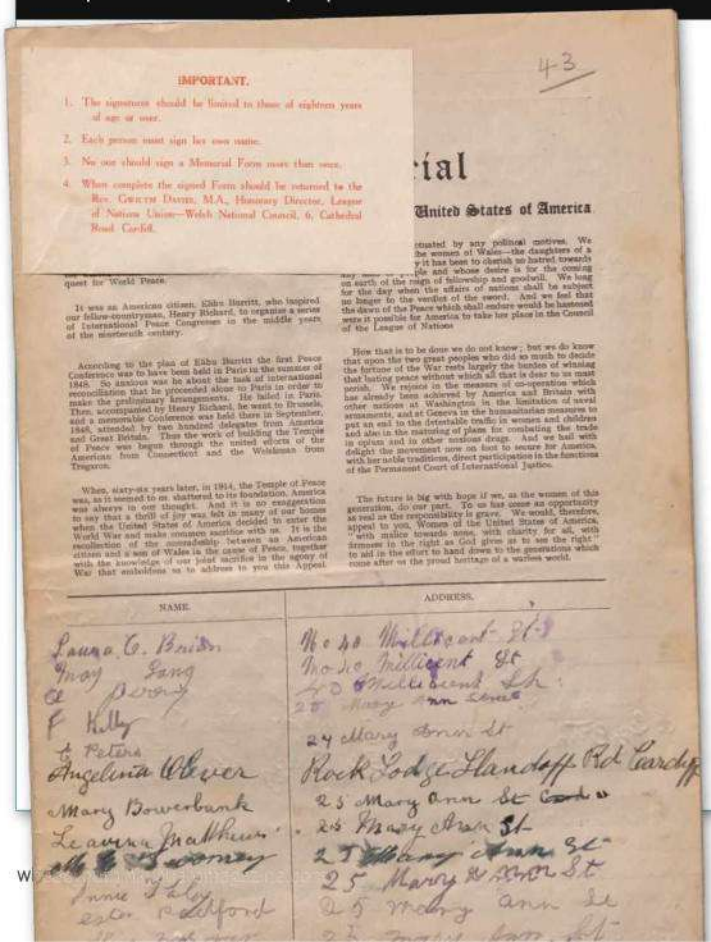
HOW DO I TAKE PART? Before Transcription Tuesday, make sure to create a FamilySearch account if you don't have one already (**familysearch.org/identity/signup/**). On the day itself, go to **familysearch.org/getinvolved/**. Select the Irish church records from the lists of projects available, and transcribe all the records on the page.

Full instructions are available at **whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/feature/transcription-tuesday-2024-familysearch**. Note that the handwriting on many of the documents is hard to read and some of the scans are unclear, so FamilySearch has given the record sets an 'Advanced' rating suitable for experienced transcribers.

Welsh Women's Peace Petition

Help transcribe a unique petition from 1923

DIFFICULTY RATING 2



PROJECT OVERVIEW In 1923, five years after the armistice that ended the First World War, 390,296 Welsh women signed a petition appealing to the women of the USA to call on their government to join the new League of Nations as a step towards everlasting world peace. The petition was returned to Wales last year by the North American Museum of History. The National Library of Wales (NLW) has recently completed its digitisation and has now embarked on an ambitious project to transcribe the petition, which lists a significant portion of the female population of Wales in 1923, and make it searchable online.

WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE? You will be asked to go to NLW's transcription website, where you will transcribe the names and addresses listed on the petition.

HOW DO I TAKE PART? Before Transcription Tuesday, make sure to create an account on the project's website (**https://torf2.llyfrgell.cymru/s/peace-petition**). On the day itself, log into the website. You will be given a page to transcribe. You will have to draw a box around each woman's name and address, and then type the information into the online form.

NLW will also host an in-person and online transcription event on the day.

Full instructions are available on our site at **whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/feature/transcription-tuesday-2024-welsh-womens-peace-petition**.

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WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

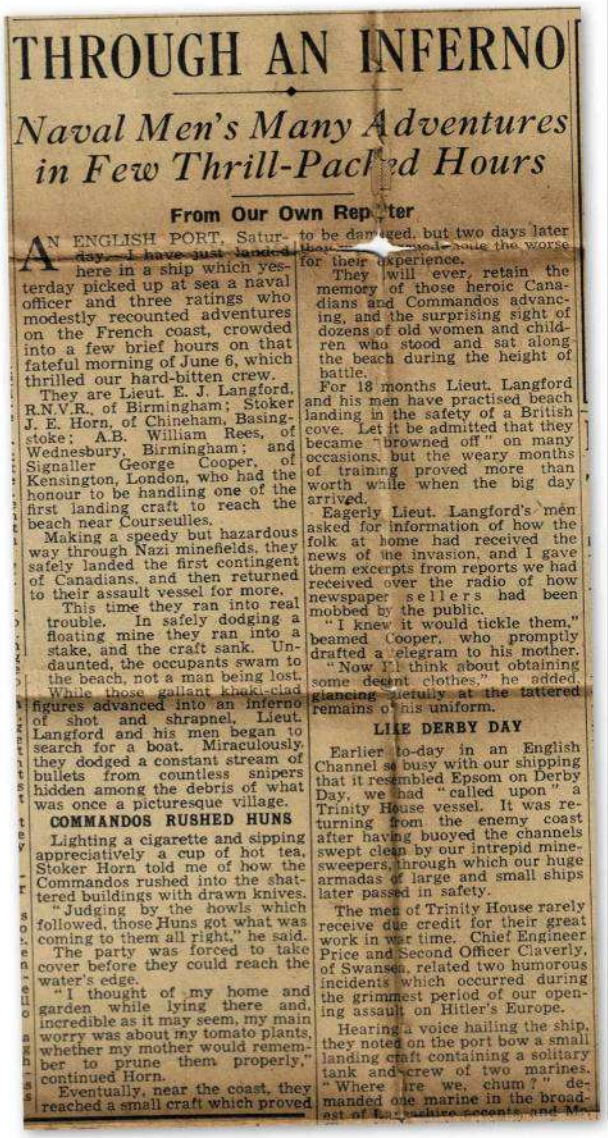
‘My Teacher Ancestors Include A D-Day Hero’

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

The fascinating characters in Katherine Langford’s family tree include several educators, not least a Navy man who served with distinction in the Second World War. By **Claire Vaughan**

Making a speedy but hazardous way through Nazi minefields, they safely landed the first contingent of Canadians, and then returned to their assault vessel for more. This time they ran into real trouble. In safely dodging a floating mine they ran into a stake, and the craft sank. Undaunted, the occupants swam to the beach, not a man being lost.

This article revealed a wealth of detail about Eric’s role in the invasion of Normandy



THROUGH AN INFERNO

Naval Men’s Many Adventures in Few Thrill-Packed Hours

From Our Own Reporter

AN ENGLISH PORT, Saturday. I have just landed here in a ship which yesterday picked up at sea a naval officer and three ratings who modestly recounted adventures on the French coast, crowded into a few brief hours on that fateful morning of June 6, which thrilled our hard-bitten crew.

They are Lieut. E. J. Langford, R.N.V.R., of Birmingham; Stoker J. E. Horn, of Chineham, Basingstoke; A.B. William Rees, of Wednesbury, Birmingham; and Signaller George Cooper, of Kensington, London, who had the honour to be handling one of the first landing craft to reach the beach near Courseulles.

Making a speedy but hazardous way through Nazi minefields, they safely landed the first contingent of Canadians, and then returned to their assault vessel for more.

This time they ran into real trouble. In safely dodging a floating mine they ran into a stake, and the craft sank. Undaunted, the occupants swam to the beach, not a man being lost.

While those gallant khaki-clad figures advanced into an inferno of shot and shrapnel, Lieut. Langford and his men began to search for a boat. Miraculously, they dodged a constant stream of bullets from countless snipers hidden among the debris of what was once a picturesque village.

COMMANDOS RUSHED HUNS

Lighting a cigarette and sipping appreciatively a cup of hot tea, Stoker Horn told me of how the Commandos rushed into the shattered buildings with drawn knives.

“Judging by the howls which followed, those Huns got what was coming to them all right,” he said.

The party was forced to take cover before they could reach the water’s edge.

“I thought of my home and garden while lying there and, incredible as it may seem, my main worry was about my tomato plants, whether my mother would remember to prune them properly,” continued Horn.

Eventually, near the coast, they reached a small craft which proved to be damaged, but two days later [illegible] for their experience.

They will ever retain the memory of those heroic Canadians and Commandos advancing, and the surprising sight of dozens of old women and children who stood and sat along the beach during the height of battle.

For 18 months Lieut. Langford and his men have practised beach landing in the safety of a British cove. Let it be admitted that they became “browned off” on many occasions, but the weary months of training proved more than worth while when the big day arrived.

Eagerly Lieut. Langford’s men asked for information of how the folk at home had received the news of the invasion, and I gave them excerpts from reports we had received over the radio of how newspaper sellers had been mobbed by the public.

“I knew it would tickle them,” beamed Cooper, who promptly drafted a telegram to his mother.

“Now I’ll think about obtaining some decent clothes,” he added, glancing ruefully at the tattered remains of his uniform.

LIKE DERBY DAY

Earlier to-day in an English Channel so busy with our shipping that it resembled Epsom on Derby Day, we had “called upon” a Trinity House vessel. It was returning from the enemy coast after having buoyed the channels swept clean by our intrepid minesweepers, through which our huge armadas of large and small ships later passed in safety.

The men of Trinity House rarely receive due credit for their great work in war time. Chief Engineer Price and Second Officer Claverly, of Swansea, related two humorous incidents which occurred during the grimmest period of our opening assault on Hitler’s Europe.

Hearing a voice hailing the ship, they noted on the port bow a small landing craft containing a solitary tank and crew of two marines. “Where are we, chum?” demanded one marine in the broad-est of Lancashire accents and [illegible]

While those gallant khaki-clad figures advanced into an inferno of shot and shrapnel, Lieut. Langford and his men began to search for a boat. Miraculously they dodged a constant stream of bullets from countless snipers hidden amongst the debris of what was once a picturesque village.” This breathless and vivid account was published in a contemporaneous newspaper. The officer mentioned is Katherine Langford’s grandfather Eric (born 1913), who commanded a flotilla of 12 landing craft that transported troops to a beach near Courseulles on 6 June 1944, better known as D-Day.

Eric had never talked much about his wartime experiences, so her research has focused on another quirky aspect of her ancestry. “The whole family are teachers. All four of my grandparents were teachers,” laughs Katherine, herself a PhD student researching physics education who lives near Bridgwater in Somerset.

Her passion for genealogy was ignited when, as a child, she was shown a big family tree depicting her grandmother’s line. She has since delved into her heritage, focusing on her father’s side.

“I didn’t know much about the Langfords, and I was quite young when my grandfather died. I did know that he’d been involved in D-Day though.”

Like his wife Muriel, Eric had been a teacher and was assistant master at Blue Coat Junior School in Walsall, Staffordshire, for seven years before joining the Royal Navy in 1940. A job reference says, “His work in folk dancing, physical training, swimming and life-saving instruction have been outstanding.”

Researching back a generation, Katherine found that Eric’s father, Joseph Langford (1880–1960), had also been a teacher and, like his son, trained at Saltley Teacher Training College in Birmingham. Joseph was the eldest of eight children born to Joseph Langford (1855–1914) and Ellen (née Davis; 1857–1932).

Joseph senior was a mining foreman, and several of his sons also worked for one of the local coal mines. It probably closed, as many of the family seem to have changed jobs or moved abroad.

“Joseph and his wife Ellen emigrated in 1907. They went to Canada first, then crossed into the USA the following year and lived in Colorado. After Joseph died in 1914 the family moved to New Zealand.”

Arthur, one of their younger sons, served with the New Zealand Rifles in the First World War. “He died in France on 1 September 1918 aged 22, I think during the Hundred Days Offensive that ended the war.”

Arthur is buried in Bancourt British Cemetery, roughly 20 miles south of Arras.

A Fatal Crash

One of his sisters also came to an untimely end. An article in the *Nelson Evening Mail* from the South Island of New Zealand and dated 18 February 1927 revealed that Elizabeth Spender (née Langford) had died in a motor-racing accident: “The Kaitaia motor sports at Ninety Mile Beach were abruptly terminated yesterday afternoon as a result of a collision between two cars… The accident caused the death of a passenger, Mrs Elizabeth Spender, of Rawene, and severe injuries to four other occupants… Mrs Spender leaves a young family of two boys and one girl.” ▶

UNP/THEO MOYE

Katherine proudly displays the *Croix de Guerre* awarded to her grandfather Eric

Katherine Langford's Family Tree

- Joseph Langford 1855–1914 = Ellen Davis 1857–1932
  - Five Siblings
  - Elizabeth Langford 1889–1927
  - Arthur Langford 1896–1918
  - Joseph Langford 1880–1960 = Agnes Sidwell 1884–1964
    - Eric Langford 1913–1994 = Muriel Blackburn 1923–2020
      - Jeremy Langford = Caroline Davies
        - One Brother
        - Katherine Langford

- Walter Sidwell 1845–1912 = Sarah Hales 1850–1930

Joseph junior stayed in Walsall, becoming headmaster of Aldridge Endowed Boys' School. The school still exists (now called Cooper and Jordan Primary School), and Katherine was amazed to find that they had her grandfather's logbooks. "He taught there during the war, and his entries mention teaching in air-raid shelters."

One note in 1941 reveals that attendance was poor due to an air raid the night before, while the following year "the school's gardens were ruined by the major's horse trampling them".

Walter Sidwell (1845–1912), Joseph's father-in-law, also had a surprise for Katherine when she found him on the census. "He was listed as a schoolteacher living in the schoolhouse in Little Packington, Warwickshire, so it was a pretty safe bet that he taught at the village school."

An article online mentioned the school's logbook. She tracked it down in the county records office and it confirmed that Walter, and his wife Sarah (née Hales; 1850–1930), had indeed taught in the village. Katherine added another two teachers to her scoresheet.

"The archivist scanned some of the logbook's pages for me." Walter's first entry proclaims, "3 May 1879 – School opened this morning under the Mastership of Walter Thomas Sidwell Certified teacher of the 2nd Class. Present 28 Girls & 25 Boys."

Another reads, "24 Jan 1881 – Re-opened the school today after being closed for more than 10 weeks on account of Scarlatina. Many absent on account of the weather, the snow being very deep in places and the cold intense."

And a shocking report 14 years later, on 9 July 1895: "John Woolley & Wm Shuttleworth punished for using foul language during play time."

When Katherine's grandmother, Muriel, died in 2020, she left a box of documents, photographs and mementos, including many that Eric had kept from the war, which allowed Katherine to follow his naval career.

"Most of it was just little slips of paper: mess receipts and identity cards, things like that. However, when I sent off for his navy records they were very fragmented. I wouldn't know about everything else if it wasn't for these scraps of paper."

A Brush With Death

Among them, a clipping from the *Totnes Times* revealed how narrowly her grandfather had cheated death on D-Day: "He had a miraculous escape when an underwater girder tipped with a shell smashed through the bottom of his assault craft on his second trip and the shell failed to explode."

Katherine digitised the documents and put them together with her other findings into a 70-page booklet for the family.

Clockwise from top left: Arthur Langford with his three brothers Stanley, Katherine's great grandfather Joseph and John

Eric in his Royal Navy uniform

One of the books she used in her research was *In Which They Served: The Royal Navy Officer Experience in the Second World War* by Brian Lavery (Conway, 2008). "It's very niche. But if someone has a relative who was in the Navy – particularly an officer – then they really should read it."

In 1940, Eric had joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, which had been founded in 1903. "He wanted to be in the Navy, but he knew how to fly a plane and he thought that if he waited until he was called up then he would end up in the Royal Air Force instead," Katherine reveals.

According to his service records, Eric started out at HMS *Collingwood*, a training base in Fareham near Portsmouth, Hampshire. "I've got some pictures of him in his square-rig uniform and it's very helpfully got HMS *Collingwood* written on the cap." Lavery's book tells how he and the other recruits would have been "living in large dormitories and woken at 6am and had initial training including foot drills, how to row and sailing a lifeboat".

Eric did his officer training at HMS *King Alfred* at Hove and Lancing, and later trained at Loch Fyne in Scotland for D-Day.

"It must have been incredibly

RICHARD LANGFORD

Katherine's archive includes medals, maps, photographs and documents

difficult because the landing crafts had a very shallow draft – their keel was not far below the waterline – so they would blow about." D-Day was originally scheduled for 5 June, but put back a day because of bad weather – and when the seaborne invasion finally took place, troops had to battle strong winds and high waves, as well as the Germans.

Correspondence from the Ministry of Defence among Eric's things suggested that he hadn't known which beach he'd fought on – although Katherine recalls Muriel talking about Omaha. According to the letters, he had been on Juno, in the Mike and Nan sectors. "I think Eric was probably in Mike, given the name of the town in the article."

A Top-Secret Mission

Katherine also came across Top Secret orders for an Anglo-Canadian operation named Operation Infatuate. They suggested Eric had fought at the Battle of the Scheldt (1944), and was one of the officers involved in capturing the strategic island of Walcheren in the Netherlands from the Nazis.

"It was really important for the Allies to open up a shipping route to Antwerp, because it shortened the supply line by several hundred miles." Walcheren was very heavily fortified, the retreating Germans using the dykes as shelters. "The Allies decided to bomb the dykes, and I've read that they ended up flooding four-fifths of the island.

"There are aerial reconnaissance photos with these orders. I assume that my grandfather used them to help him navigate the coastline. There's also a map that shows the German defences. It's quite crumpled and very muddy, so it's clearly been well used.

"The Scheldt was very heavily mined, so the Allies had to use landing craft to transport everything – troops and supplies. I think my grandfather was involved in ferrying troops about while the mines were cleared to get the bigger ships in."

For his actions on D-Day, the French government awarded Eric the *Croix de Guerre* – although he didn't receive it until 1973. That was the year when he was instrumental in getting Totnes in Devon, where he lived, twinned with the town of Vire in Normandy, and Vire's mayor crossed the Channel to present Eric with his medal. He also won the Distinguished Service Medal, and was mentioned in dispatches.

Eric made this much-loved teddy bear for Katherine's father Jeremy

As well as uncovering the extent of her family's teaching genes, Katherine has been thrilled to discover more about Eric's war. His love of teaching (and learning) and for his family never left him. "My grandfather organised bricklaying and other courses for the sailors before they were demobbed to help them find employment, and he learnt several new skills himself including how to make a teddy bear for my father, who was born shortly afterwards." Eric died in 1994. "The teddy bear has lost all his fluff, but we've still got him."

TELL YOUR STORY

Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

Resources

These resources were especially useful for Katherine's research

BACKGROUND READING

Brian Lavery's *In Which They Served: The Royal Navy Officer Experience in the Second World War* (Conway, 2008) helped Katherine understand Eric's Navy experiences. Other occupational guides can be found online or at record offices.

FAMILY PAPERS

You never know what interesting snippets relations might have squirrelled away as souvenirs of life events, from yellowing newspaper clippings to Top Secret war orders. Make sure you ask your older relatives and see what you can find.

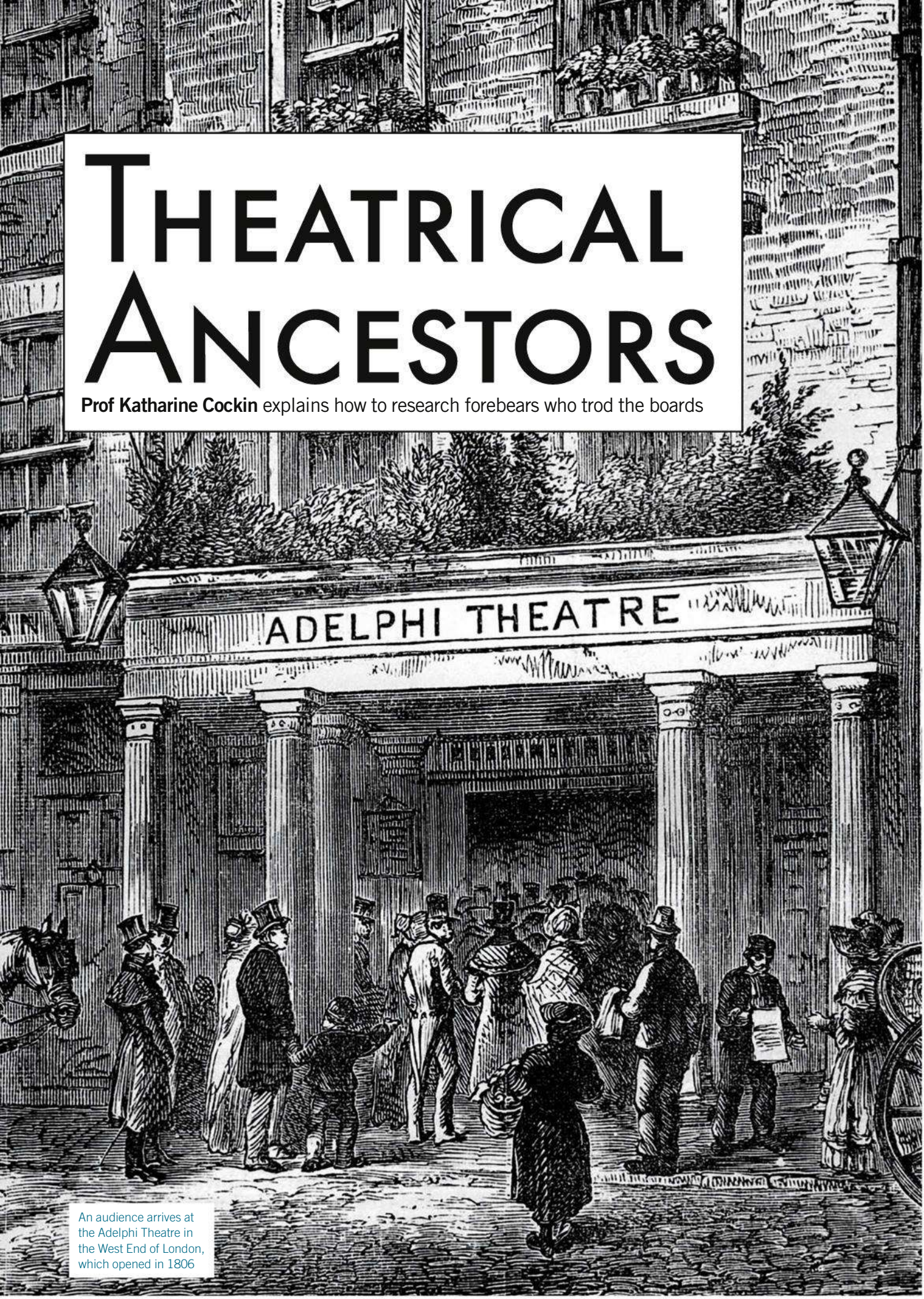
SCHOOL LOGBOOKS

From 1862, headteachers of grant-receiving schools were required to keep a record of the daily goings-on – from pupils' progress to closures due to snow. Katherine located these records in local archives and the schools' own collections. Some logbooks are online, including in Findmypast's collection 'National School Admission Registers & Log-Books 1870–1914' (**bit.ly/fmp-nat-schools**).

UNP/THEO MOYE

Theatrical Ancestors

Prof Katharine Cockin explains how to research forebears who trod the boards



An audience arrives at the Adelphi Theatre in the West End of London, which opened in 1806

GETTY IMAGES

During the 19th and 20th centuries theatre and performance were the main forms of entertainment in Britain, and they touched everyone in different ways. Apart from the actors, producers and authors directly involved, audience members, amateurs and entrepreneurs all had important parts to play. The evidence for your own relations' involvement can be found in unexpected places. Publicity materials such as programmes and posters are often overlooked by researchers but, as I discovered when writing my recent book *Tracing Your Theatrical Ancestors* (Pen & Sword, 2023), invaluable resources for family history.

Business Records

As commercial enterprises, theatres have operated as businesses and places of employment that involved transactions between employer and employees, customers, advertisers and investors. Business records relating to theatrical events and theatre buildings are therefore useful sources of information; you can search for these in archives around the country using The National Archives' online catalogue Discovery (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**). There are many different types of performing arts, and many allied trades to explore. The more lavish theatrical productions involved many people with a variety of skills, from carpenters and engineers to costume-makers. The names of musicians, composers and costume designers may be acknowledged in the theatre's publicity materials, but many of those working backstage were not mentioned. The names of inventors of complex special effects in very elaborate productions may feature in legal documentation for securing patents. Local businesses paid to appear ▶

Dame Ellen Terry 1847–1928

Family historians owe this legendary actor a huge debt of thanks

Born into an acting family, Ellen Terry became internationally renowned from her early days as a child actor to filling leading roles in the Lyceum Theatre in the West End of London, and on tour. She performed her own lectures on Shakespeare in the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand, and in later life acted in several films. She was involved in many charity events, including the one in the annotated programme.

Ellen was married three times, but her only children resulted from a seven-year relationship with architect Edward William Godwin (1833–1886). The couple's daughter, Edith Craig (1869–1947), was a prominent theatre director, responsible for women's suffrage plays and pageants, and a leader of British art theatre and amateur theatre. Their son, Edward Gordon Craig (1872–1966), was an actor, director and set designer whose extensive writing has featured in the curriculum of theatre studies.

Ellen studied her roles diligently, and developed a deep interest in literature and the arts more broadly. She was a prolific correspondent and built up an extensive archive containing more than 20,000 documents, and an impressive library.

After Ellen's death, Edith Craig established her mother's house, Smallhythe Place in Tenterden, Kent, as a 'memorial museum', and the National Trust took over the property and archive when Edith herself died (**nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/kent/smallhythe-place**). Ellen and her children had a vast network of connections, so this archive is rich in data for potential family history research.

John Singer Sargent's *Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth* (1889)

Expert Picks

Katharine recommends these three websites for researching your relations who worked as performers

John Johnson Collection

w **tinyurl.com/bodleian-joe-johnson**

Held by the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, this is the largest collection of theatrical ephemera – programmes, posters and adverts. Some have been digitised.

Searching For Theatrical Ancestors

w **ellenterryarchive.essex.ac.uk/star**

This website includes a database of names from over 34,000 records created in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, plus research guidance and available resources.

The Ringling

w **tinyurl.com/ringling-ecb**

This 'virtual museum' from the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida, USA, includes a wealth of images of publicity material from British circuses.

GETTY IMAGES

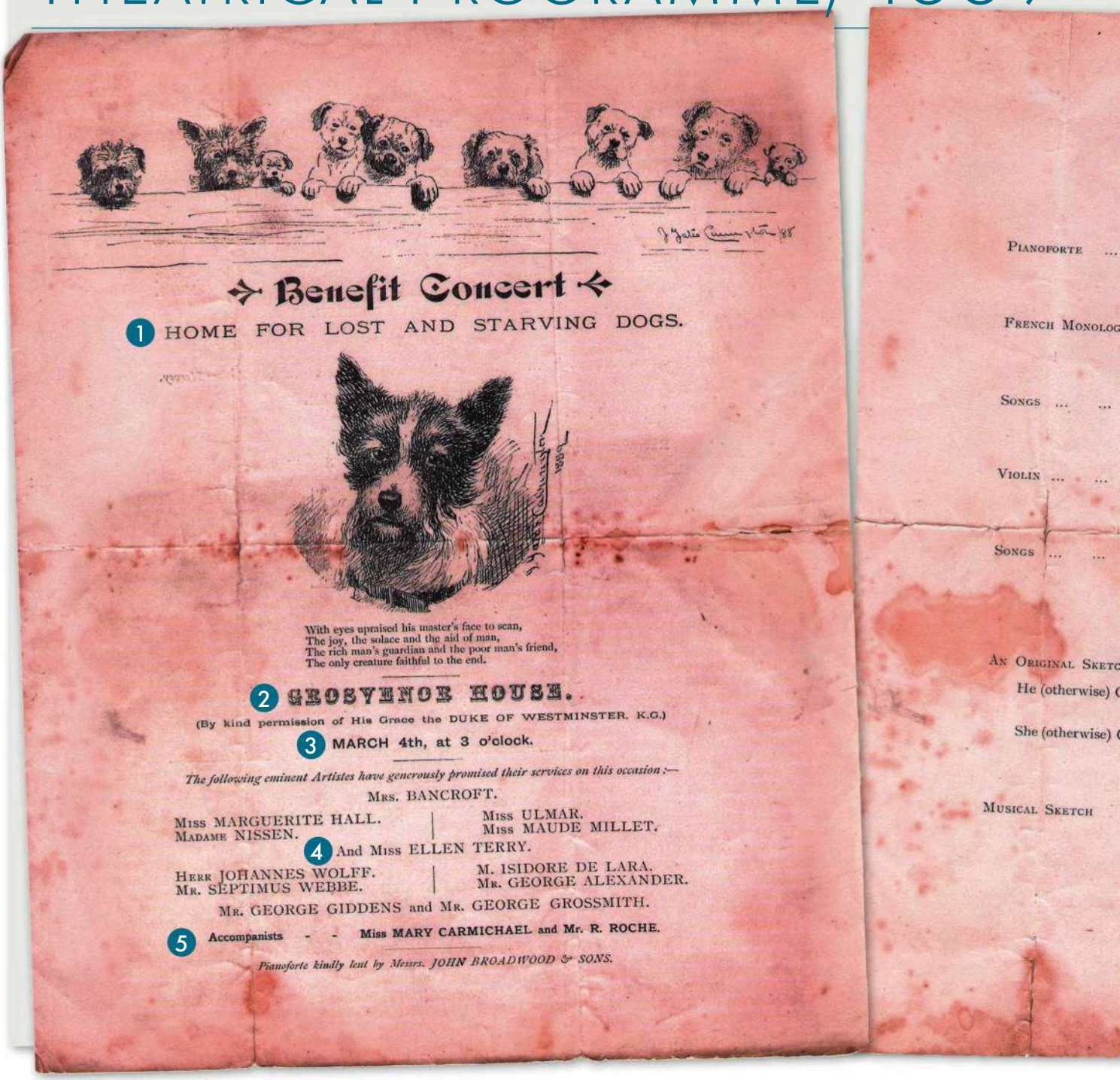
in advertisements in some programmes, and the sale of advertising space formed a supplementary income for the theatrical enterprise.

Theatres have often been notorious scenes of crimes and accidents. President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in Ford's Theatre, Washington DC, USA, in 1865, while lighting in the form of candles, limelight and gaslight has led to devastating fires. Trapdoors and other stage equipment have created unexpected hazards. Such memorable events are likely to have affected audience members and been reported by newspapers, so search the vast digitised collection at the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**). Newspaper reviews are also a significant and accessible source of information.

Social Purpose

Theatre has also been used for educational, fundraising and political-campaigning purposes. The popularity of children's theatre and theatre in education during the course of the 20th century has created generations of adults with some theatrical childhood memories from school performances, including nativity plays. Theatrical events were used by campaigners for women's

Theatrical Programme, 1889



Benefit Concert

1 HOME FOR LOST AND STARVING DOGS.

With eyes upraised his master's face to scan,
The joy, the solace and the aid of man,
The rich man's guardian and the poor man's friend,
The only creature faithful to the end.

2 GROSVENOR HOUSE.

(By kind permission of His Grace the DUKE OF WESTMINSTER, K.G.)

3 MARCH 4th, at 3 o'clock.

The following eminent Artistes have generously promised their services on this occasion:—

MRS. BANCROFT.

MISS MARGUERITE HALL. | MISS ULMAR.
MADAME NISSEN. | MISS MAUDE MILLET.

4 And MISS ELLEN TERRY.

HERR JOHANNES WOLFF. | M. ISIDORE DE LARA.
MR. SEPTIMUS WEBBE. | MR. GEORGE ALEXANDER.

MR. GEORGE GIDDENS and MR. GEORGE GROSSMITH.

5 Accompanists - - Miss MARY CARMICHAEL and Mr. R. ROCHE.

Pianoforte kindly lent by Messrs. JOHN BROADWOOD & SONS.

PIANOFORTE ...
FRENCH MONOLOG
SONGS ... ...
VIOLIN ... ...
SONGS ... ...
AN ORIGINAL SKETC
He (otherwise) (
She (otherwise) (
MUSICAL SKETCH

suffrage as a powerful means of reaching new audiences, including director and activist Edith Craig, daughter of acclaimed actor Dame Ellen Terry whose career lasted almost 70 years (see the box). Charities used performances to raise funds. Consequently participants may not have identified themselves as connected with the theatre, because it was seen as a means to an end.

Performances have not always used a purpose-designed building. Public halls, fields, churches and streets have all been sites of performance. The earliest popular cultural forms of performance were mobile and adaptable to impromptu staging in a street, a fair or an inn. Acrobatics, dances, songs, comic turns and tricks delighted many audiences. Traces of these theatrical activities of travelling performers can surface in autobiographical accounts, and even inadvertently in the criminal records available on websites including Old Bailey Online (**oldbaileyonline.org**). Where theatrical events were taken on tour, the participants' names may also appear in documents relating to the mode of transport, such as ships' passenger lists.

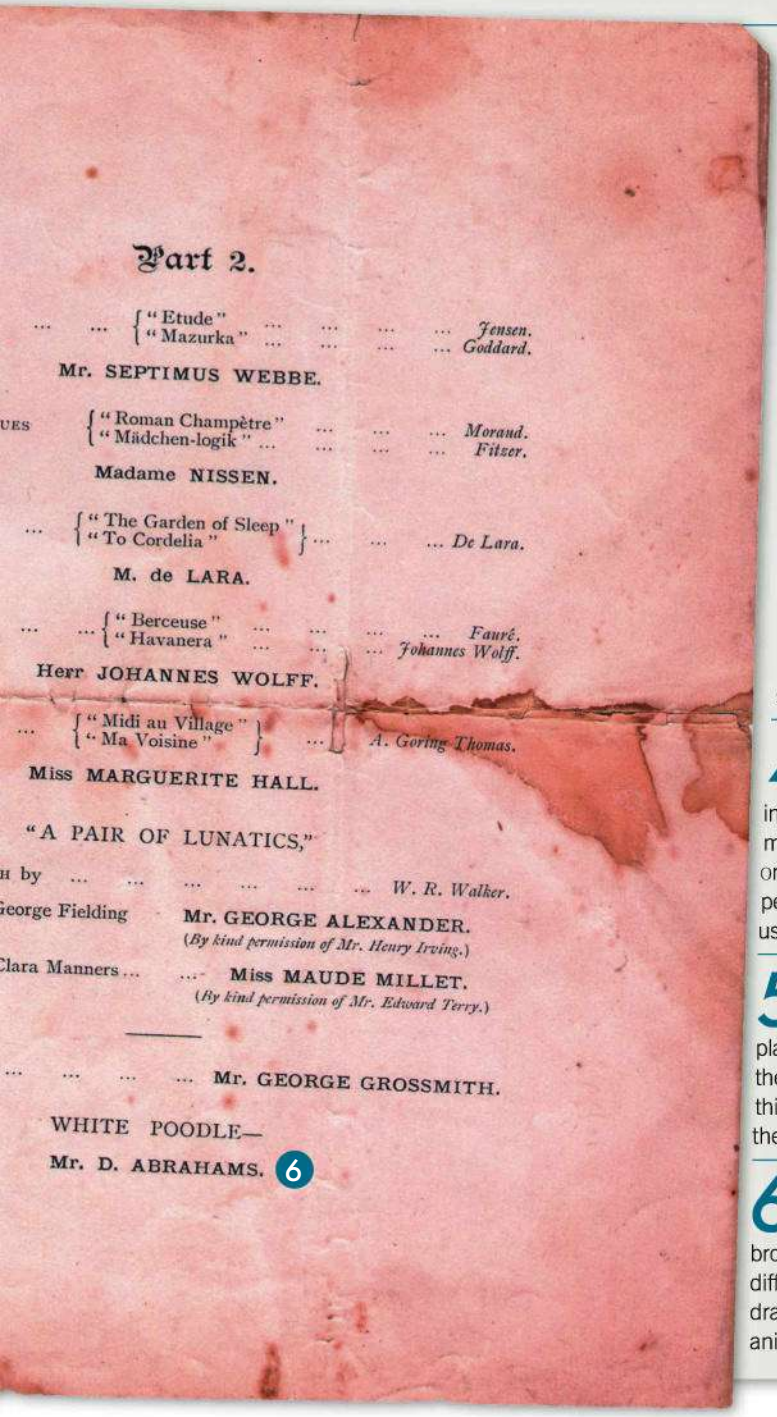
Music-hall and variety performances drew on a rich cultural heritage of popular cultural forms. The British Music Hall Society (**britishmusichallsociety.com**) is a very valuable source of information on this field. Audiences were diverse, and performers sometimes crossed from theatre to music hall. In addition, a significant body of research and archives has been built up in the UK and the USA on circuses and fairs, including the National Fairground and Circus Archive at the University of Sheffield **(sheffield.ac.uk/library/special-collections-heritage-and-archives/national-fairground-and-circus-archive)**.

A Matter Of Status

It's important to be aware of the relative cultural status of different forms of theatre and the performing arts during your research, because it will affect the likelihood of documentation having survived and where you might find relevant records: archives of more famous individuals, actors, directors and authors. The geographical location of the performance and the date are also crucial data.

The popularity of theatregoing with middle-class audiences, the potential for commercially successful productions of plays, and the creativity of those ▶

These pages are included in a programme recording the details of a fundraising event. The document is held by Neil Wholey, whose forebear David Abrahams was one of the performers



Part 2.

... ... { "Etude" ... ... Jensen.
"Mazurka" ... ... Goddard.

Mr. SEPTIMUS WEBBE.

UES { "Roman Champètre" ... ... Moraud.
"Mädchen-logik" ... ... Fitzer.

Madame NISSEN.

... { "The Garden of Sleep" } ... ... De Lara.
"To Cordelia" }

M. de LARA.

... ... { "Berceuse" ... ... Fauré.
"Havanera" ... ... Johannes Wolff.

Herr JOHANNES WOLFF.

... { "Midi au Village" } ... A. Goring Thomas.
"Ma Voisine" }

Miss MARGUERITE HALL.

"A PAIR OF LUNATICS,"

H by ... ... W. R. Walker.

George Fielding Mr. GEORGE ALEXANDER.
(By kind permission of Mr. Henry Irving.)

Clara Manners ... ... Miss MAUDE MILLET.
(By kind permission of Mr. Edward Terry.)

... ... Mr. GEORGE GROSSMITH.

WHITE POODLE—

Mr. D. ABRAHAMS. 6

1 Home For Lost And Starving Dogs

The organisation(s) involved in theatrical events may reveal the interests of your ancestor; in this case, animal welfare.

2 Grosvenor House

The venue, here the former home in London of the family of the Dukes of Westminster, can help you research the management, typical productions and likely audiences expected.

3 March 4th

The date of performance provides a crucial detail for checking other documentation such as reviews.

4 Miss Ellen Terry

Researching famous individuals who are mentioned may lead to more information on your ancestor. Note too that a performer's place in a programme usually indicated their status.

5 Accompanists

What role did your forebear play in the event? Was it typical of their involvement in performance at this time? There is also a credit for the manufacturer of the piano.

6 Mr D Abrahams

Charity fundraising events brought together entertainers from different fields of performance, from dramatic actors and musicians to animal impersonators.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Stage is the newspaper of the British entertainment industry, especially theatre. The British Newspaper Archive has 6,361 issues back to its 1880 launch.

The original interior of the Royal Opera House in London's Covent Garden in 1808, shortly before it was destroyed by a fire

GETTY IMAGES

involved in theatre-making were significant features of 19th-century leisure. Actor–managers such as the first actor to be knighted Henry Irving became powerful and influential figures. Irving toured the UK and USA with his Lyceum Theatre Company and Terry; together they became unofficial cultural ambassadors for Britain in the USA, and were inseparably associated with Shakespeare. Terry and Irving gave Royal Command Performances for Queen Victoria, and had portraits painted by the leading artists of the day. John Singer Sargent painted *Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth* (1889) in her costume decorated with iridescent beetle wings. Some fine artists, such as Edward Burne Jones, were even involved in painting scenery for some of the lavish Lyceum productions.

Remember that the biographies, autobiographies, letters and diaries of actors, newspaper coverage of their productions, and records of their travels and interactions with famous individuals can include the names of lesser-known individuals. Such traces can be useful clues.

An Unmissable Archive

Terry's archive has become a very rich resource for family historians, and provides a wealth of data about theatre, culture and politics. She had a long career and broad interests, often receiving letters from fans as well as requests to perform for charity. One such event raised money for the Home for Lost and Starving Dogs in London, the future Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, in 1889.

As the principal investigator of the online Ellen Terry and Edith Craig Database based on the material in the archive (**ellenterryarchive.essex.ac.uk/star**), this event came to my attention when family historian Neil Wholey contacted me about his research into the Rosa Troupe of theatrical relations (**rosatroupe.co.uk**). He spotted Terry's name on a programme as well as that of his great grandfather David Abrahams, designated "White Poodle".

This annotated document brings together performers who usually worked in very different venues: Terry appeared extensively in theatres, whereas costumed animal impersonators performed in large touring productions of variety theatre and pantomimes.

It is particularly apt for the "White Poodle" to have appeared towards the end of the event, because it would be a strong reminder of the reason for the performances, and could have solicited further donations.

TOP TIP!

Theatre and the performing arts have relied on printed publicity to promote their business. Scrutinise play programmes and posters, and reviews in newspapers.

KATHARINE COCKIN is a professor of English literature in the Department of Literature, Film, and Theatre Studies at the University of Essex (**tinyurl.com/uni-essex-cockin**)

Resources

Take your research further

ARCHIVE

The V&A's Theatre & Performance Archives

w **tinyurl.com/vam-theatre**

The V&A's vast collection is unavailable until the new V&A East Storehouse opens in Stratford in 2025. In the meantime you can search the catalogue online.

BOOK

Tracing Your Theatrical Ancestors

Katharine Cockin

Pen and Sword, 2023

An essential guide to resources with case studies

Who's Who in the Theatre

Ed. John Parker et al

Pitman, 1912-1978

There are multiple editions of this publication and *Who Was Who in the Theatre* available in libraries.

WEBSITES

Arthur Lloyd's Music Hall and Theatre Website

w **arthurlloyd.co.uk**

This great site covers people, theatres and businesses.

British Music Hall Society

w **britishmusichallsociety.com**

This organisation's website has useful research guides.

Scottish Theatre Archive

w **tinyurl.com/scot-theatre**

The STA in the University of Glasgow Library includes posters and programmes.

Society for Theatre Research

w **str.org.uk**

Find an index to back issues of the society's journal, as well as links to resources.

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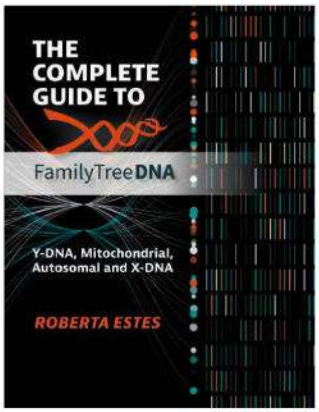
THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO FamilyTreeDNA:

Y-DNA, Mitochondrial, Autosomal and X-DNA

By Roberta Estes

Just some of what's covered:

- **The science behind DNA tests – written for everyday people**
- **Y-DNA – Your Father's Story – types of markers and how to use your results**
- **Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) – Your Mother's Story – matches and what they mean**
- **Autosomal Family Finder Tests – Matches to all your family lines**
- **X-DNA – Your secret tool that's included with Family Finder**
- **An extensive glossary explaining the vocabulary associated with DNA testing.**



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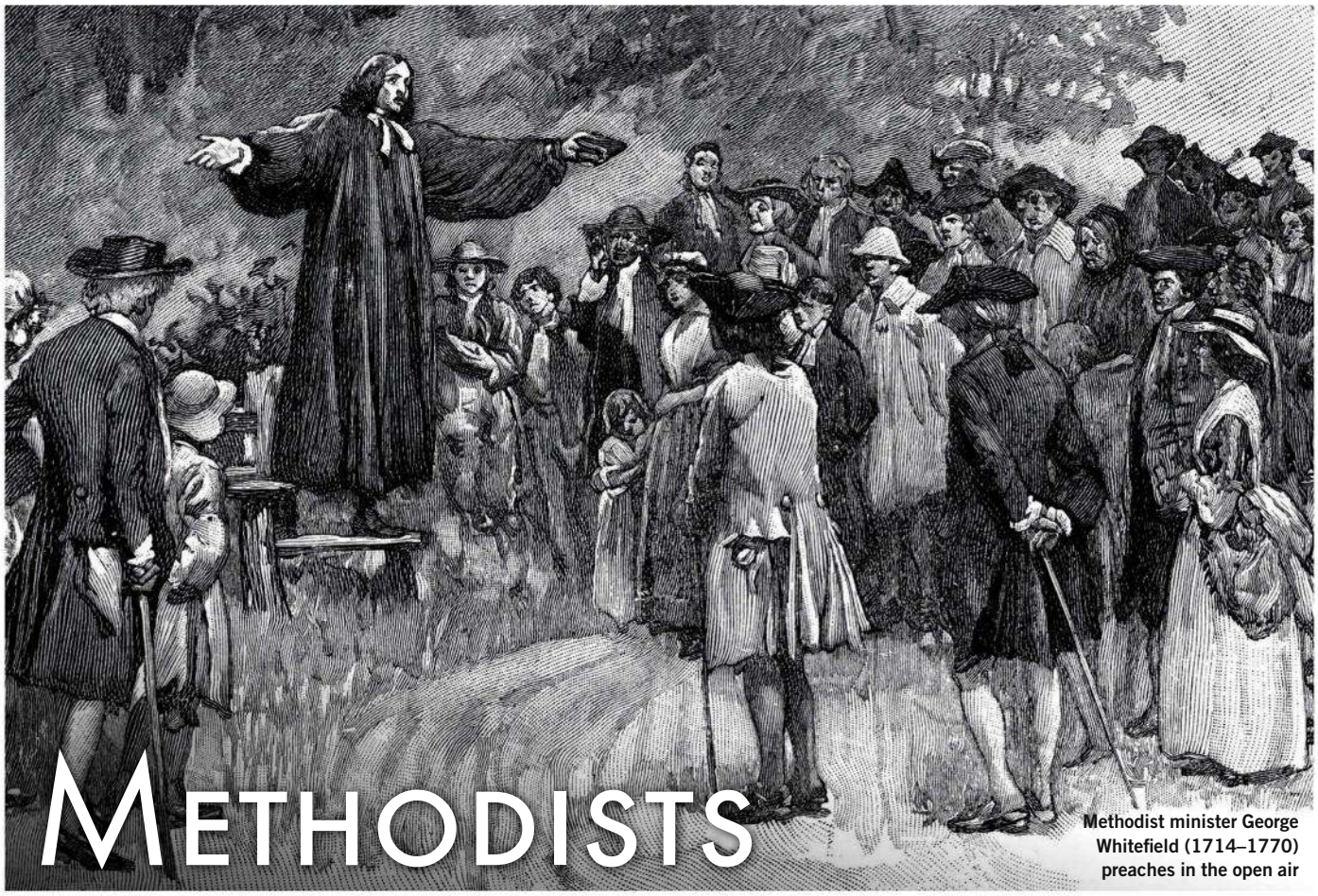

METHODISTS

Methodist minister George Whitefield (1714–1770) preaches in the open air

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Jonathan Scott recommends sites for researching followers of Methodism in your tree

The origins of the Methodist Church stretch back to 1729 when brothers John and Charles Wesley founded a 'Holy Club' at the University of Oxford. Members met weekly, eschewing luxuries and entertainments, and allocating time to visit the sick, poor or imprisoned. Because of the rigid way that they approached their particular form of Protestantism, contemporaries dubbed them "Methodist", which John adopted as the name for what would eventually become its own denomination. The movement changed the landscape of religious practices in Britain.

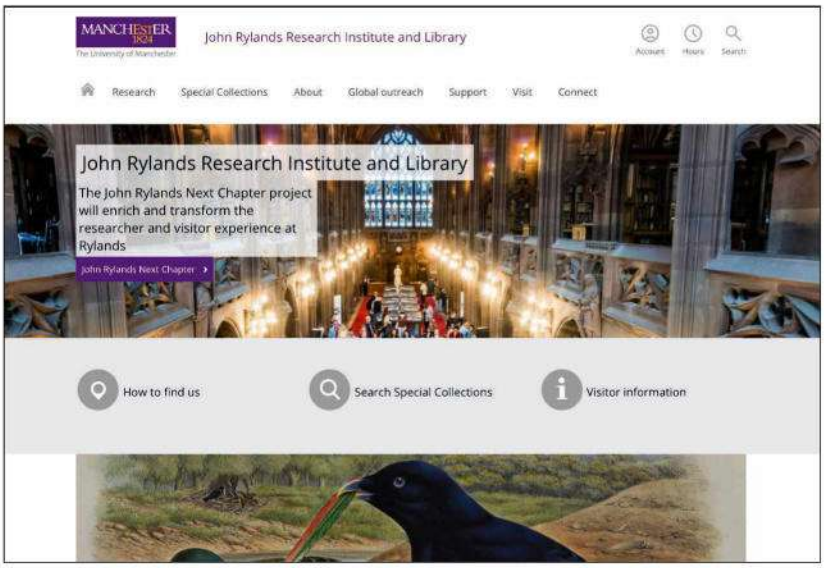
Fortunately for family historians, large numbers of nonconformist registers, including the Wesleyan Methodist Metropolitan Registry created in 1818 to record followers' births and baptisms throughout England and Wales, were collected by the General Register Office in 1837, when civil registration began, and again in 1857. What's more, these records are readily available today via the main commercial websites Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) and TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**).

MY METHODIST HISTORY

w **mymethodisthistory.org.uk**

This site was launched in 2012 to share information about the denomination's history since 1932. That was the year of a conference at the Royal Albert Hall in London, where the main British denominations – Wesleyan Methodists, Primitive Methodists and United Methodists – came together to become the modern Methodist Church. There's all sorts of material here specific to post-union history, but there are also sister sites focusing on the different denominations (such as My United Methodists; **myunitedmethodists.org.uk**). Name-rich sources include a First World War Roll of Honour and the Wesleyan Methodist Historic Roll, naming more than one million donors to the Wesleyan Methodist Million Guinea Fund between 1899 and 1904.

BEST WEBSITES



JOHN RYLANDS RESEARCH INSTITUTE AND LIBRARY

w **www.library.manchester.ac.uk/rylands/**

The University of Manchester's breathtaking library has been home to the Methodist Archives and Research Centre since 1977. Methodist circuits were grouped into districts, like Anglican dioceses. The centre has the world's largest collection of circuit plans up to 1933, containing the names of itinerant and local preachers. It also holds marriage registers from Methodist chapels or missions, district records that contain character assessments of applicants for local preachers, as well as information on ministers and their families. Other highlights include the archives of three ministerial training colleges in Birmingham, Manchester and Richmond.

THE LEYS DIGITAL ARCHIVE

w **theleys-digitalheritage.net/default.aspx**

The Leys school in Cambridge was founded in 1875 to educate the sons of Methodist ministers and has historically been popular with Methodist families, although it wears its Methodism lightly now. This site provides searchable access to magazines and other school publications from 1876–1975, revealing details of sporting and academic achievement and theatrical performances. Other schools may hold similar material in their archive, or may have deposited records with their local record office, and the Methodist Independent Schools Trust's website lists most of the historic Methodist schools in England and Wales at **methodistschools.org.uk/about-us/about-mist**.

EXPERT'S CHOICE

Stuart A Raymond wrote *Tracing Your Nonconformist Ancestors* (2017)

The cornerstone is laid for John Wesley's New Room, the first purpose-built Methodist chapel, in Bristol in 1739

The website Methodist Heritage (**methodistheritage.org.uk**) is the Church's own general introduction to Methodist history. Clicking the 'Research and Resources' tab in the menu bar leads to pages on 'Researching Methodist History' and 'Researching Family History', both of which provide valuable information on sources. The first introduces you to the major archival collections, such as the aforementioned Methodist Archives and Research Centre in Manchester, which holds the Connexional Archives (the records of the annual Methodist Conference), the archives of important training centres, and the libraries of the Wesley Historical Society and similar institutions. It also includes an extensive listing of online books, and a link to the website A Dictionary of Methodism (see the 'Go Further' box).

The 'Researching Family History' page links to baptismal registers searchable online, *The Methodist Who's Who 1912* on the Internet Archive (**archive.org**), various lists of ministers, the minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference (which include obituaries of ministers), and pages where you can share your own Methodist history. If you want to share the history of your own church, then the 'Telling Your Story' tab will help you to do it.

The 'Methodist History' tab provides a brief description of denominational history, including pages on overseas mission; social justice; youth and education; politics; hymnody; and women in Methodism. The 'Visit' tab describes about 100 historic sites across Britain that are worth seeing.

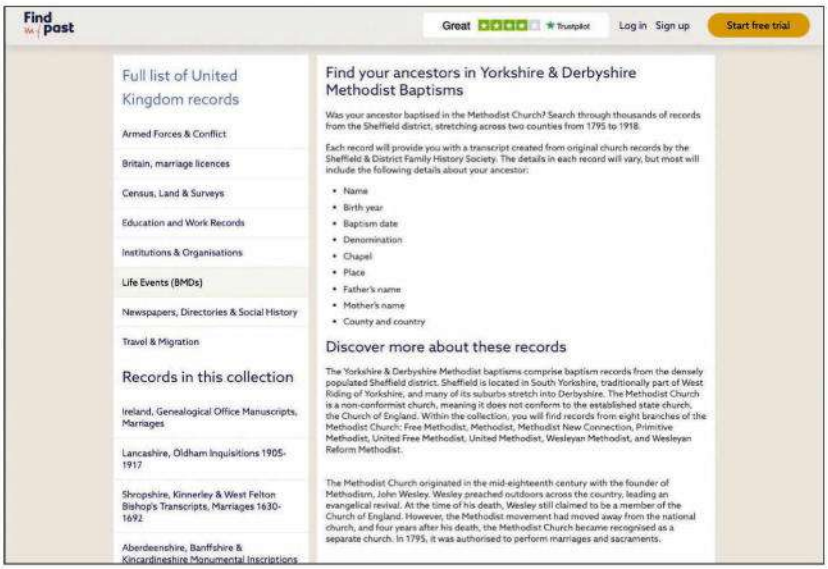
Finally, via the 'Heritage News' tab you can subscribe to the website's occasional email newsletter and read past editions.

GETTY IMAGES

THE METHODIST RECORDER, 1861–1919

w **microform.digital/boa/collections/91/the-methodist-recorder-1861-1919**

If you purchase a week-long single-user licence costing £20 you can explore back issues of the *Methodist Reorder* via academic publisher British Online Archives. The title was launched in 1861 by an editorial council of six ministers, described here as "a more liberal rival to the first Methodist newspaper, *The Watchman*, which it later incorporated". It often includes obituaries of preachers. Meanwhile the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**) includes more than 18,000 pages from the *Methodist Times*, which was established in 1885 to promote an evangelical branch of Methodism.



FINDMYPAST

w **bit.ly/fmp-yorks-derbys-meth-bapt**

It's definitely worth exploring what the commercial websites have to offer – remember that much of their data can be assessed for free at libraries and archives. Findmypast's collections include this database of Methodists from Yorkshire and Derbyshire, which was compiled by the Sheffield & District Family History Society (**sheffieldfhs.org.uk**). Some of Ancestry's Methodist material can be found at **ancestry.co.uk/search/categories/methodist_records**, including a free index to Isle of Wight Methodist registers (1813–1937), and the collection 'Medway, Kent, England, Methodist Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1798–1932'.

Go Further

Eight more websites that you can't afford to miss

A DICTIONARY OF METHODISM

w **dmbi.online**

This site contains a vast array of information relating to Methodism in Britain and Ireland.

MANCHESTER ARCHIVES AND LOCAL STUDIES

w **tinyurl.com/manc-arch-meth**

This example of the kinds of local guides often produced by regional archives describes the circuit system and what records survive.

METHODIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY

w **https://digital.soas.ac.uk/mms**

Learn more about the collections held by this society, which was founded in 1932.

MUSEUM OF METHODISM

w **wesleysheritage.org.uk/the-museum-of-methodism/**

John Wesley's first purpose-built chapel in London includes this museum in its crypt. You can view some of the exhibits on its website.

OXFORD CENTRE FOR METHODISM AND CHURCH HISTORY

w **https://ocmch.wordpress.com**

The centre closed in July this year, but its site has links to online exhibitions and collections. Some holdings will be available in a new reading room at Wesley Memorial Church, Oxford.

THE LONDON ARCHIVES

w **tinyurl.com/tla-marc**

The former London Metropolitan Archives holds records of the capital's Methodists that were in the Methodist Archives and Research Centre.

WELSH RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS TRUST

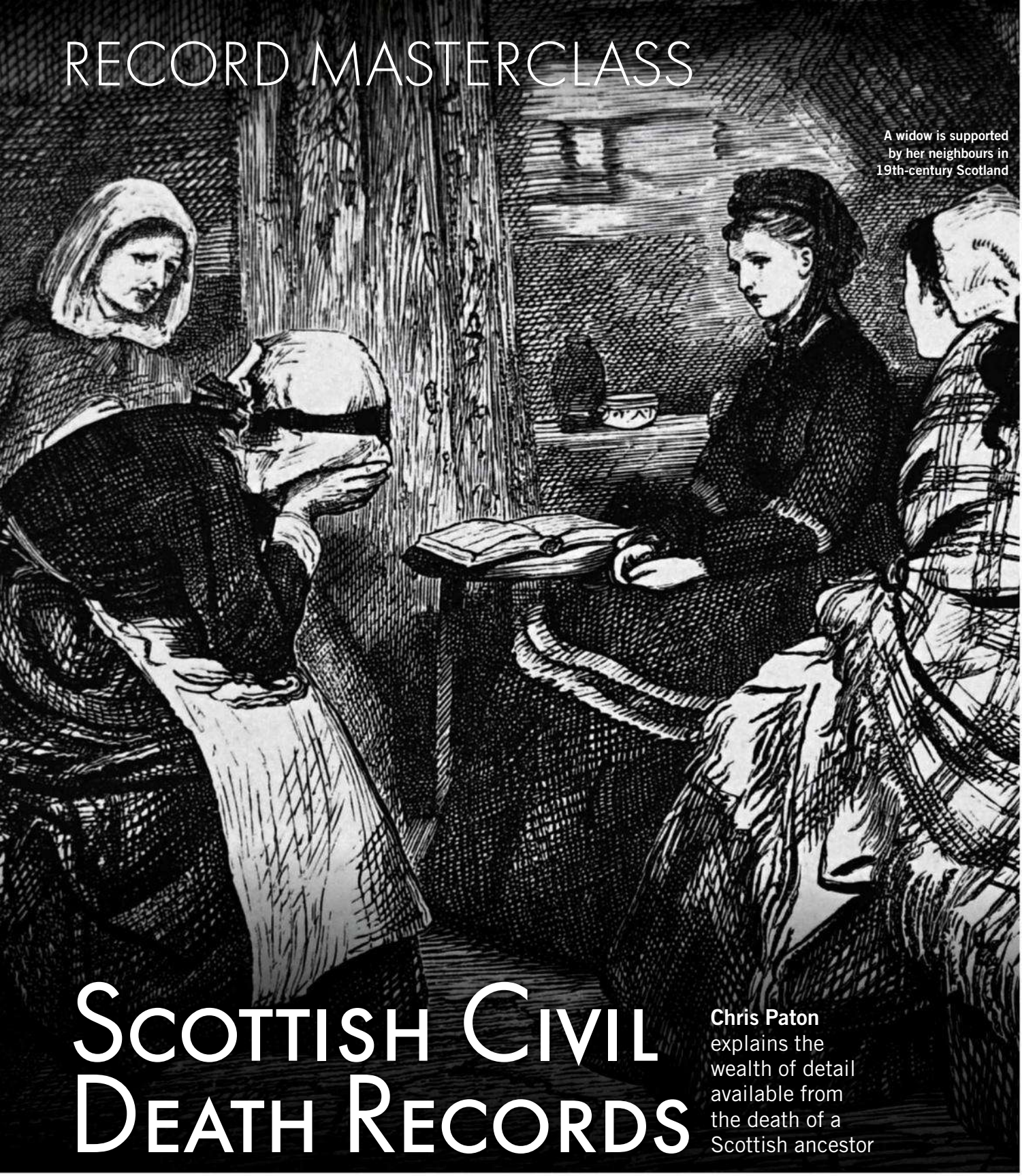
w **tinyurl.com/wrbt-wesleyan**

Find out about Wesleyan Methodists in Wales.

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

w **wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk**

The society's site has a guide to genealogical research, and a link to back issues of its journal hosted at **biblicalstudies.org.uk**.



A widow is supported by her neighbours in 19th-century Scotland

Scottish Civil Death Records

Chris Paton explains the wealth of detail available from the death of a Scottish ancestor

The civil registration of deaths in Scotland started in January 1855, with two registers kept: the first retained by local registrars, and the other by the central General Register Office in Edinburgh, now the National Records of Scotland (**nrscotland.gov.uk**). Historic records older than 50 years are available to view on the government website ScotlandsPeople (**scotlandspeople.gov.uk**), with each image costing six credits to view (currently £1.50); indexes for more recent events are available on the site, from which certified copies can be ordered, at £12 per certificate. All records to the present day, bar the most recent year, can be viewed at the ScotlandsPeople Centre in Edinburgh (**www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/visit-us**; the day search fee is £15), and at local registrars' centres across the country (see **nrscotland.gov.uk/research/local-family-history-centres**).

The 1854 Registration Act stipulated that the nearest relative to the deceased, along with the occupier of the property where the death took place, should report the event to a registrar within eight days; failure to do so incurred a 20s fine. If the occupier was the deceased, an inmate of the house was to assume the role. Deaths were to be recorded in the parish or registration district where the event happened,

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Death Records, 1906

This document recording deaths in Shettleston, Lanarkshire, is held by the National Records of Scotland and available digitally via ScotlandsPeople (**scotlandspeople.gov.uk**)

—Page 102.—

1906. DEATHS in the District of Shettleston in the County of Lanark.

	No.	(1.) Name and Surname. Rank or Profession, and whether Single, Married, or Widowed.	(2.) When and Where Died.	(3.) Sex.	(4.) Age.	(5.) Name, Surname, & Rank or Profession of Father. Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother.	(6.) Cause of Death, Duration of Disease, and Medical Attendant by whom certified.	(7.) Signature & Qualification of Informant, and Residence, if out of the House in which the Death occurred.	(8.) When and where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
See Reg. of Cor. Entries Vol 4. page 28. 24th September 1906.	304	William Harkness. Electrical Engineer. Married to Jane McMillan Drinnan.	1906, September First 9h. 0m. A.M. H.M. Prison Barlinnie. Usual Residence 14 Milton Street Partick	M.	31 years	William Harkness Engineer. Mary Harkness M.S. McKerrell (deceased)	Asphyxia caused by Strangulation as cert. by A Laurie Watson M.B. Ch.B.	James Drinnan Father in law 400, Paisley Road West Glasgow	1906. September 3rd At Shettleston. W.D. Tower Registrar.
Cler. err. in col 4 [illegible]	305	John Fulton. Steel Worker. (Single)	1906. September First 11h. 30m. P.M. 68 Main Street Tollcross	M.	20 years 11 months	John Fulton (7) Steel Worker. Agnes Fulton M.S. Paterson	Phthisis Pulmonalis. 9 months as cert. by Dugald McKinlay M.B. Ch.B.	John Fulton. Father Present 11 Braidfauld Street Tollcross	1906. September 3rd At Shettleston. W.D. Tower Registrar.
	306	Robert Gray. Pitheadman. Married to 1st Catherine Fisher or Baker 2nd Christina Robertson or Ferguson	1906. September First 10h. 55m. A.M. 13 Dalton Street Tollcross	M.	46 years	Robert Gray Pitheadman (deceased) Margaret Gray M.S. Stark (deceased)	Pulmonary Tuberculosis 7 months Addison's Disease 1 month as cert. by George Wilson [illegible]	Robert Gray Son	1906. September 3rd At Shettleston. W.D. Tower Registrar.

W.D. Tower Registrar.

1 Reg. Of Corr. Entries

Due to the suspicious cause of death (strangulation), a separate record is indicated as available through the Register of Corrected Entries (RCE).

2 Usual Residence

William Harkness died at Barlinnie Prison. Since this wasn't his permanent home, his usual residence in Scotland is also recorded here.

3 Married To

Robert Gray was married twice. Both spouses are recorded in the "Name and Surname" column, together with their maiden surnames.

4 William Harkness

Uniquely in the UK, historic Scottish death records list both parents' details. Remember that the information is only as accurate as the informant's knowledge.

5 Informant

The signature of the informant is recorded along with his or her address, and whether they were present at the death.

6 Pulmonary Tuberculosis

Causes of death are listed in order of the likely contributing factors, with details of the length of time that the deceased had a particular medical condition. The certifying physician is also noted.

and not in the home parish of the deceased; if the death was not in the parish of residence then the "usual residence" was recorded in the register alongside the details of where it occurred. Should those tasked with registering the death fail to turn up, the registrar could compel them to appear within 14 days, upon pain of a 40s fine. However, in most cases, deaths were actually recorded within three days by the turn of the 20th century, mainly because a certificate was required to claim life-assurance policies, and to arrange a burial.

In cases of a suspicious death, or one with no apparent cause, the procurator fiscal (public prosecutor) was called in. Upon an investigation's conclusion, the findings were to be reported to the registrar of the parish or district where the death occurred, and entered into the register – either by the fiscal directly, or by the original informant registering the result, with the fiscal's conclusions then noted within the Register of Corrected Entries (RCE). Such registrations are noted in the left index of the death entry, and the accompanying RCE record is free to view on ScotlandsPeople, via a link at the top of the death record's viewing page.

A doctor was required to provide a medical certificate to the registrar for every death, citing the causes and ▶

Mourners leave a church after a funeral in the Hebrides

Resources
Don't miss these websites

BOOK

Tracing Your Scottish Ancestry Through Church and State Records
Chris Paton
Pen & Sword, 2019
As well as interpreting statutory death registration and church burial records, Chris' book also examines the law surrounding Scottish deaths.

WEBSITES

SCOTLANDSPEOPLE
w **www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/help-and-support/guides/statutory-register-deaths**
This guide explains Scottish statutory death records, including the Register of Corrected Entries.

THE SCOTTISH WAY OF BIRTH AND DEATH
w **tinyurl.com/guc-scot-way**
The website of the Centre for the History of Medicine at the University of Glasgow explains why a statutory system for registering deaths was introduced.

▶ duration suffered. Initially they had 14 days to do so, upon a £2 fine, but this was relaxed from 1860, when they only became liable to prosecution if they failed to send a medical certificate upon request. The period to do this was also reduced from 14 days to seven. Medical certificates remained in the registrar's custody for five years, after which they could be destroyed.

Once a death had been registered, the registrar was obliged to give a certificate to the informant, to be supplied to the undertaker, who in turn had to forward the document to the relevant burial or cremation authorities. Failure to do so incurred a £10 fine.

TOP TIP!
ScotlandsPeople's indexes show the registration year, not the date of the event. So if you can't find a December death, check to see if it was registered the following January.

What You Can Learn

Death records include the name of the deceased; their occupation, age and sex; marital status; the date, time and place of death; the names of current and previous spouses; the names of the deceased's parents, including the mother's maiden name and any previous married names (and whether both were alive or deceased); the father's occupation; the cause of death and length of illness, whether certified and by whom; the name of the informant (and whether present at the death); and the date and place of registration. If smallpox was the cause of death, the patient's condition as to vaccination was included. In 1855 only, the registrar also noted the names of any children born to the deceased, their ages, and date of death if they were deceased before that year. Between 1855 and 1860 the place of the deceased's burial was recorded too, along with the name of the undertaker; but from 1856 until 1860 the names of any spouses were not recorded. From 1967, the deceased's date of birth has been recorded as well.

CHRIS PATON is a genealogist, author and tutor based in East Ayrshire, and runs the research service Scotland's Greatest Story (**scotlandsgreateststory.co.uk**)

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Q&A

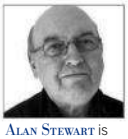
Our team of experts offers tips and inspiration Edited By Claire Vaughan

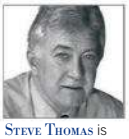
Dave Annal is a genealogist, author and lecturer

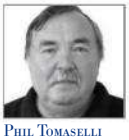
Katherine Cobb is a member of AGRA based in Somerset

Debbie Kennett is the author of *DNA and Social Networking*

Jayne Shrimpton is a professional dress historian and portrait specialist

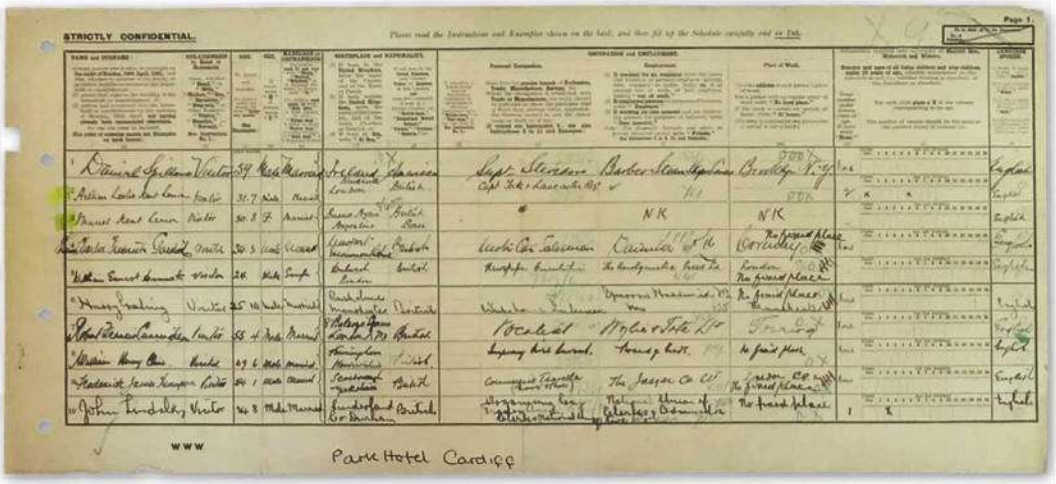

Alan Stewart is a family history writer, and author of *Grow Your Own Family Tree*


Steve Thomas is a genealogist with over 20 years' experience


Phil Tomaselli is a military family history expert and author

Sarah Williams is the editor of *WDYTYA? Magazine*

Where was Pamela Kent-Lemon in 1921?



Wendy Ray's grandparents were staying in the Park Hotel, Cardiff, in 1921, but where was their daughter Pamela Betty?

Q My mother's sister doesn't seem to appear on the 1921 census. I have located my mother, aged seven months, with her grandparents, her aunt and her aunt's family in Ascot, Berkshire. My mother's parents were staying at the Park Hotel, Cardiff, but I've been unable to find my mother's sister, Pamela Betty Kent-Lemon (born 6 June 1916, East Preston, Sussex), who had just turned five. I have located all her aunts and uncles and her maternal grandmother, but she is not with any of them either.

Wendy Ray

The second page of the entry had been crossed out and the names written again

A On Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**), you'll find Pamela Betty Kent-Lemon mentioned in a few newspapers as one of the bridesmaids at the wedding of her uncle Edward Noel Kent-Lemon to Marjorie Cross. This took place at St Margaret's Parish Church, Horsforth, near Leeds, in 1920. The *Leeds Mercury* published on 30 September reproduces a photograph of the wedding party, including "Miss Betty Kent-Lemon" which suggests she was known by her middle name.

Since your mother, Diana, was with her paternal grandparents in 1921, I wondered whether Betty might have been with her maternal grandmother (her maternal grandfather having already died). Her mother had been Muriel Wanklyn before she married, so I took a fresh look at the page for Matilda P Wanklyn and her three unmarried daughters (all of whom, like Muriel, had been born in Buenos Aires, Argentina) at Flat B, 48 Sloane Square, Chelsea. There was no sign of Betty, however.

Returning to the original 1921 census record for your mother, I saw that some mistakes had been made when adding the information. The second page of the entry had been crossed out and the names written out again on the third page. Among these errors, Betty's name could have been missed off.

I did wonder if Betty had perhaps attended the same school as her mother, but the 1901 census shows the 10-year-old Muriel Wanklyn living in Acton with her mother and five siblings. In 1914, Muriel's older sister Gladys had married Claude Swift, a teacher at Lancing College, Shoreham, Sussex, but in the 1921 census, he is shown as retired (although he was only 34). You could try searching for Betty by her initials, in case she was in a school elsewhere, or in hospital.

Alan Stewart

HAVE YOU HIT A BRICK WALL? Please email your questions or family photographs to the following address: **wdytyaquestions@ourmedia.co.uk**

If selected, your query will be answered on these pages. Please note that we receive a large volume of correspondence each month, and cannot reply to each message individually. You are more likely to receive a response if you keep the question and background information concise (no more than 150 words), with a clear goal of enquiry.

Was my great nan born in Cork, Ireland?

Q I'm trying to trace the origins of my great nan, Mary Smith (c1887–1969, Ongar, Essex). Stories about her include that she was born in Cork, Ireland; lived in an Irish convent; came to England at 14; and married an older man called Aldridge. Her second husband, Charles Frederick Rex, is my great grandfather.
Amanda Procter

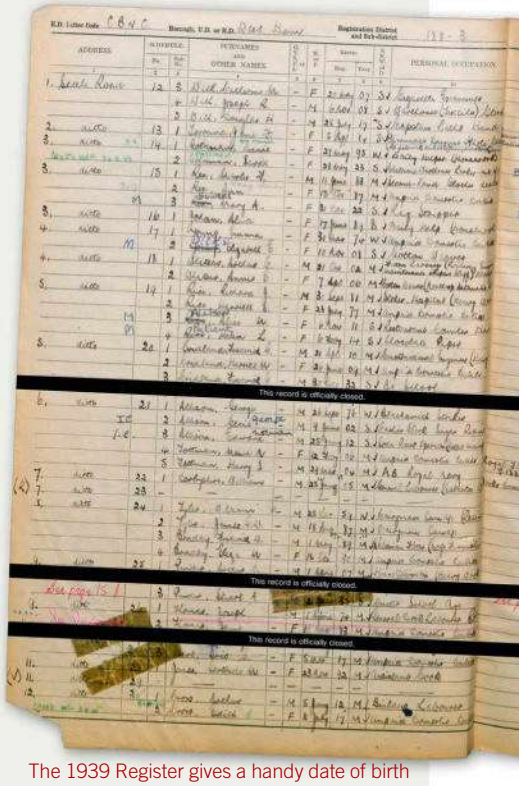
A The ages supplied by Mary vary hugely across the available records, giving a birthdate range of 1876–1887. However, since she was married in 1899 – to John (William) Aldridge – we can fairly confidently reject anything suggesting a birthdate later than 1883. And given the consistency in the ages recorded for her at her first marriage (22 in 1899) and in the 1901 and 1911 censuses (23 and 34 respectively), I would theorise she was born around 1877. Her date of birth in the 1939 Register is 15 October 1887. We can take the year with a pinch of salt, but the day and month are probably accurate.

Curiously, there are two records of Mary's marriage to your great grandfather; the one that you have from 1921 and a second one registered in 1922 in which she appears as "Mary B Aldridge".

At Mary's first marriage, her father is recorded as William Smith, a bricklayer, but when she married Charles Rex she claimed her father was called John. She was consistent in describing him as a bricklayer, so that detail is probably true.

She lists three different places of birth over three censuses: Hackney (1901), St George (in the East) (1911) and Bethnal Green (1921). Significantly, there is no suggestion that she was born in Ireland.

So, we're looking for a Mary (Ann) Smith who was probably born on 15 October some time around 1877, somewhere in the East End of London, whose father (probably William) was a bricklayer. It's not going to be easy, but I don't think it's a lost cause. A quick search of the General Register Office indexes suggests that only a handful of birth records meet the criteria. If one of them was born on 15 October, I think you have your woman!
Dave Annal



The 1939 Register gives a handy date of birth

How can I get a copy of an original marriage record with signatures?

Q I read somewhere recently about various ways of ordering marriage certificates. The General Register Office (GRO) will only make a handwritten copy, but I would like to get a copy of the original, so that I can see the signatures. How do I get one?
Peta McCauley

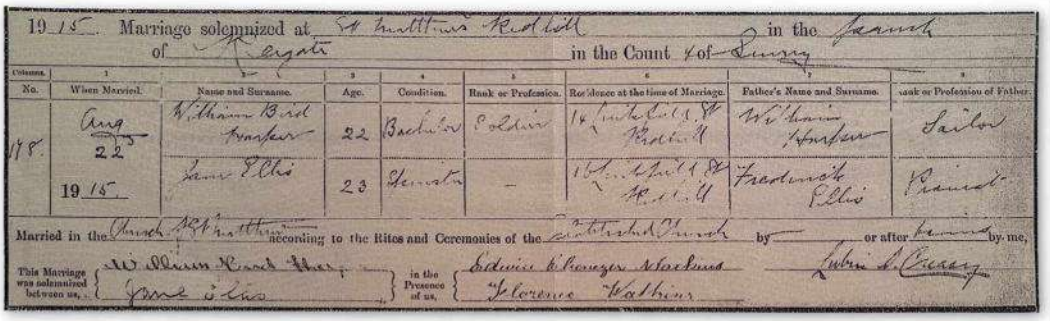
A The answer to this question partly lies in where the people in question got married. If they were wed in a church, then the copy that will include their signatures will either be held by the church or in the local record office where the church has deposited its historic parish registers. If you are lucky, they may even be online as record offices forge more partnerships with genealogy companies to digitise their collections.

If the couple had a civil wedding, then you will need to contact the register office where they tied the knot and ask for a copy certificate. Many councils are now making it easier to order these online and have set up searchable indexes, often in collaboration with local family history societies.

It's important to note the reference details that you may find on sites such as FreeBMD (**freebmd.org.uk**) will not work when ordering direct from the local register office. You will need to use their own indexes or supply them with the necessary details for them to search manually.

The website UKBMD has a very useful list of councils that offer online ordering (**ukbmd.org.uk/copy_certificates**), as well as a page linking to all the indexes that enable you to search local birth, marriage and death databases: **ukbmd.org.uk/local_bmd**.

The cost of ordering a copy marriage certificate locally should be the same as ordering one via the GRO (£12.50), but the benefit is that you have the chance of receiving a copy with your ancestors' actual signatures. I say "chance" because many register offices still copy out the words by hand onto a new form. However, a few years ago *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* did a test, and ordered a range of certificates from several local register offices. We found that more than half photocopied the original entry, giving you the actual signatures of the couple and their witnesses.
Sarah Williams



Original marriage certificates will include the happy couple's and witnesses' signatures, provided they were literate

Picture Analysis

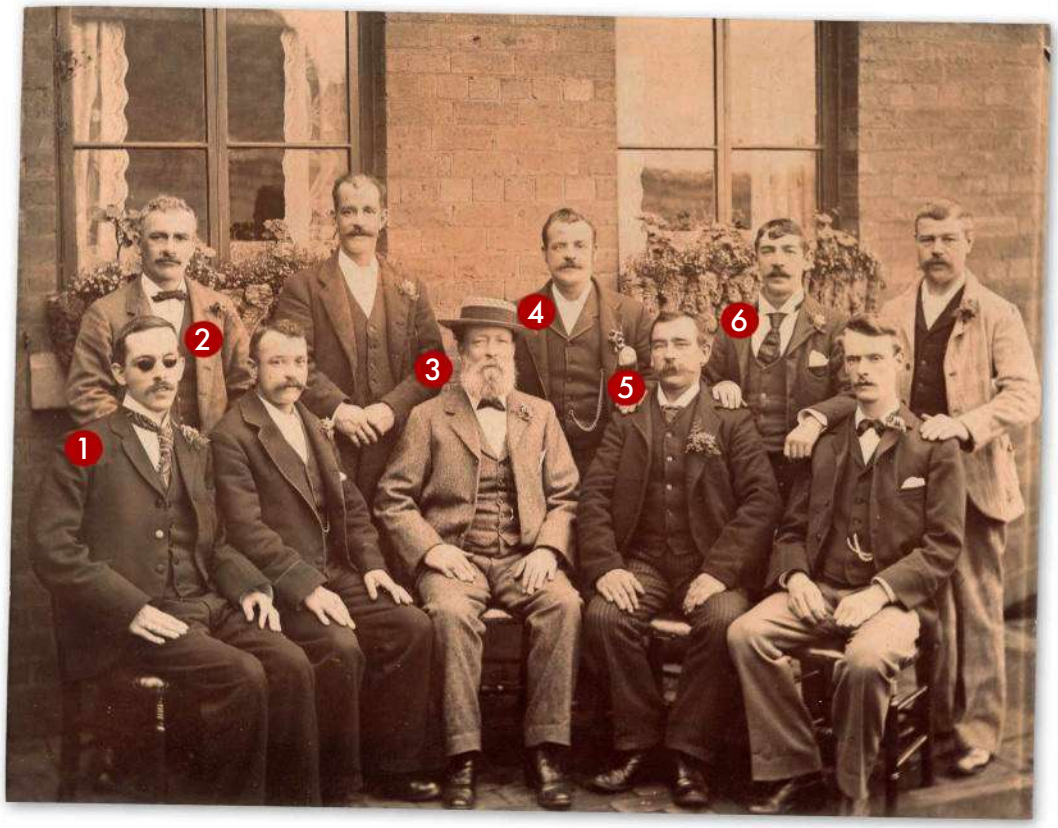
Which George Hyde is shown in this wedding photograph?

Q I recently discovered this family photograph (possibly of a wedding). I believe it relates to the Hyde family who managed farms near Stratford-upon-Avon. One of my direct ancestors, George Hyde, is at the centre. There were several individuals with this name in different generations, so a date would help narrow which one he is.
Sarah Welsh

A This is a professional group photograph by a representative hired from a local studio. The card mount bears printed details bottom right: the lettering is unclear, but deciphering "Latham" and "Longton", I'd suggest this may indicate Latham & Bott, long-established photographers of Longton, Staffordshire. See, for example, this advert on a site dedicated to the history of Stoke-on-Trent: **https://www.thepotteries.org/descriptive_account/longton/90a.htm**.

The setting is the yard of a Victorian house, this male-only group posing formally in good tailored three-piece suits. They may represent the male contingent of a wedding party, but floral buttonholes can be misleading. Earlier generations wore flowers in their lapels for all manner of gatherings and events, including for a special photograph. We can't discern the occasion from the scene, but the older man seated centrally is the most senior/important figure here, perhaps marking a milestone birthday, retirement from work, or he was hosting a reunion of friends or relatives.

The style of the men's clothes and facial hair confirms a date broadly in the late 1880s or 1890s. Despite the likely Staffordshire location, if you still believe the central figure is a George Hyde, the timeframe should clarify which particular ancestor he is.
Jayne Shrimpton



1 SUITS
Men's formal suits circa the late1880s/1890s were of slim to moderate cut and always comprised three items: jacket/coat, trousers and waistcoat, the separate pieces usually matching, although waistcoat or trousers might contrast.

2 SPECTACLES
The man on the far left wears unusual heavily tinted spectacles. This would not be considered sunglasses as such, but definitely implies impaired or limited vision.

3 FACIAL HAIR
Facial hair typically reflected a man's age. In the late Victorian era, older men usually wore a beard, like our central figure – younger men typically a neat moustache.

4 HAT
Only the older man here wears a hat. His lightweight straw boater-style hat was a popular summer mode in the late 1880s and early 1900s.

5 SHIRT COLLARS
At the time white shirt collars were still stiffly starched. Sometimes they were high standing or winged, or more comfortably the collars were turned down into points.

6 NECKTIES
Four men either wear white neckties, signifying a special occasion, or possibly no neckties at all, which is unusual but could suggest manual workers or sporting men.

Who was Walter Vincent Smith?

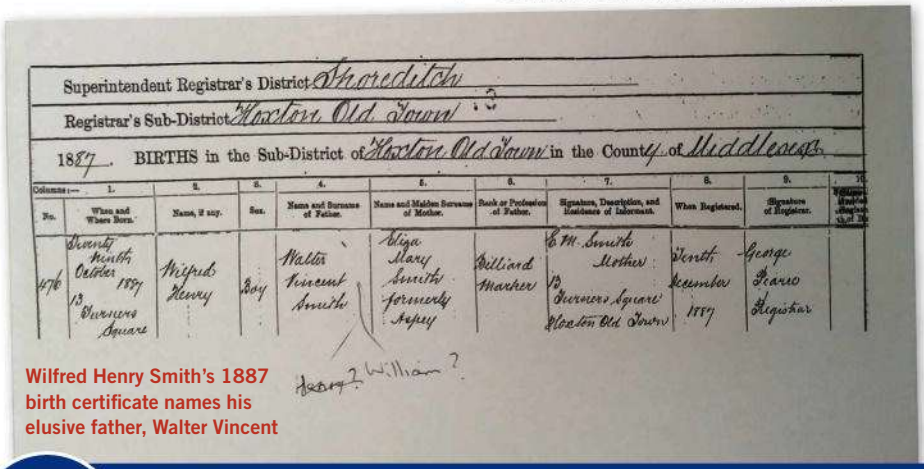
Q I am researching my wife's family and have hit a blank on Walter Vincent Smith, who appears to be her maternal great grandfather. The birth certificate of her grandfather, Wilfred Henry, shows Walter Vincent as the father and Eliza (née Asprey) as the mother. This is confirmed on the birth certificate of his sister, Alice. I can find no other record for Walter.
Roy Stockes

A Like you, I have been unable to find the marriage of Walter Vincent and Eliza. This, together with Eliza's later use of her maiden name, suggests they never married, despite Eliza being recorded as a widow in the 1891 census. As Walter Vincent's death has not been found, it could be that the couple separated. Where children were involved, after separation it was not uncommon for the mother to refer to herself as a widow.

Between 1840 and 1870, there was only one birth registration for a Walter Vincent Smith, the son of John and Sophia, born in Oxfordshire in March 1869. This Walter Vincent became a police officer in Oxfordshire, where he married in 1891. Although he appears in both the 1881 and 1891 Oxfordshire censuses, it is always possible that Walter Vincent spent some of the intervening period in London. He is old enough to be Wilfred Henry's father. If it can be established when Walter Vincent joined the police, it might help indicate whether he could possibly be your man.

With the exception of the London Metropolitan Police, surviving police records may be held by the local force or relevant record office. A useful research guide can be found on The National Archives' website at **nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/police/**.

Finally, since Walter Vincent, son of John and Sophia, is included in a number of trees on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), you could test your DNA to see whether it produces a match with any of their owners.
Katherine Cobb



Superintendent Registrar's District Shoreditch
Registrar's Sub-District Hoxton Old Town
1887. BIRTHS in the Sub-District of Hoxton Old Town in the County of Middlesex

No.	When and Where Born.	Name, if any.	Sex.	Name and Surname of Father.	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother.	Rank or Profession of Father.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
476	Twenty ninth October 1887 13 Brunswick Square	Wilfred Henry	Boy	Walter Vincent Smith	Eliza Mary Smith formerly Asprey	Billiard Marker	E.M. Smith Mother 13 Brunswick Square Hoxton Old Town	Tenth December 1887	George Pearce Registrar

Henry? William?

Wilfred Henry Smith's 1887 birth certificate names his elusive father, Walter Vincent

TOP TIP

The Open University's website includes a research guide to the archives of police forces in England and Wales that you'll find very useful if you have a police ancestor. You can download it for free from **tinyurl.com/open-university-arch-police**.

Can DNA tell me who my great grandfather is?

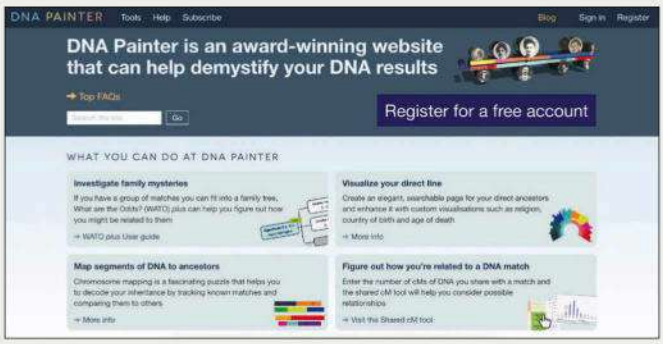
Q My grandad, John Richard Green (born 1917), was the illegitimate son of Emily Rebecca Green (born 1885). We always knew that John's father was called Roberts.

I have a high DNA match (330 cM) at MyHeritage (**myheritage.com**) with a lady called Eileen who appears to be my dad's first cousin.

She is the daughter of Beatrice Roberts (born 1898), the daughter of William Henry Roberts and Minnie Hollis. Beatrice had four brothers.

I have DNA matches at AncestryDNA (**ancestry.co.uk/dna**) with descendants of Beatrice's brothers. How can I work out which of the Roberts men is my ancestor?
Paula Green

A You should start by using AncestryDNA's SideView Tool to sort the matches into the paternal and maternal sides. Next, group the paternal matches using the website's Shared Match Tool and the coloured dots. Your paternal matches separate into two distinct clusters, representing the ancestry of your two sets of paternal great grandparents. The Roberts matches are in one cluster. You need to reconstruct the trees of the people in that cluster to see how they relate to each other, then work out your relationship to these matches.



Debbie used DNA Painter's WATO tool to solve Paula's query

You had two matches descending from Beatrice's brother Percy Henry Roberts sharing 156 cM and 112 cM respectively. Another match, sharing 106 cM, is descended from Beatrice's brother Robert Edward Roberts. The What Are The Odds? (WATO) tool at DNA Painter (**dnapainter.com**) can help here, because it enables you to estimate where a person might fit into a known family tree by using the amount of DNA they share with other people in that tree. It can also incorporate DNA results from multiple firms.

The WATO analysis shows that you are mostly likely related to Eileen as a half first cousin once removed, and to the other Roberts DNA matches as a second cousin once removed. This would make William Henry Roberts your great grandfather.
Debbie Kennett

Big Question

Can you help me uncover my forebear's origins?

Q My ancestor, Edwin Frederick Jones Finnis, was said to have been born in Lichfield, Staffordshire. I have not been able to find any records of his birth at all, and have no idea of his parents' names or exact year of birth. He supposedly fought in the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, but I don't know what regiments he was attached to. It's thought that he left the UK at some point for New Zealand, and married there. Can you help fill in the gaps?

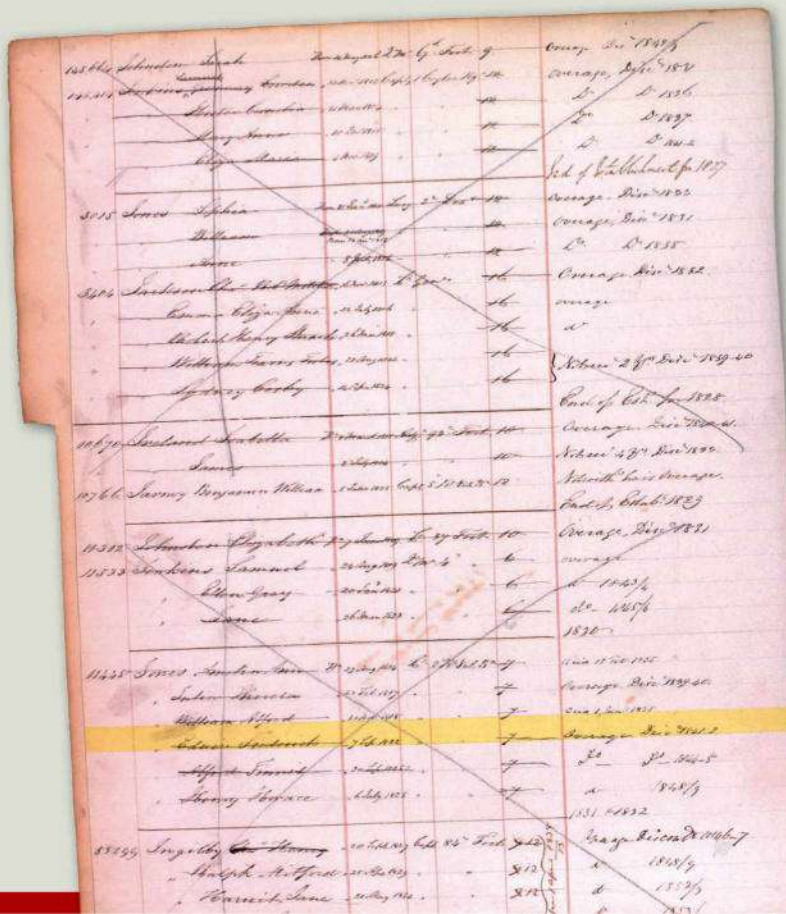
Robyn Prince

ROBYN PRINCE has hit a brick wall while researching Edwin Frederick Jones Finnis

A There is a misplaced expectation that a person will use the name they were given at birth for the rest of their life. Often they do not, and name variations should be searched for if they appear not to be where they should be.

When I searched for Edwin Frederick Jones, rather than Finnis, born in the 1820s, I found him in the collection 'UK, Royal Hospital Chelsea Admission Books, Registers and Papers, 1702–1980' on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), apparently in receipt of a payment along with his siblings from the Officers: Compassionate Allowances, Royal Bounty and Relief Fund. There is some form of ledger and much of the information does not refer to them, although clearly their dates of death do. A file number on the left may lead you to further information.

His widow's diligence has provided a wonderful collection of documentation



Steve found Edwin Frederick and Alfred Finnis Jones in this British Army pension record

The date, 1830, would seem to indicate when the pension relating to a lieutenant in the 2nd Regiment Veteran's Battalion (presumably their father) was granted. They received £7. The comment "overage" seems not to point to age (some were clearly minors) but rather that they were an excess, possibly to the budget available and were discharged.

What makes this entry relevant is the presence of an Alfred Finnis Jones. A further search under this unique name revealed a discovery in a closely related record series on Ancestry: 'UK, Officers' Birth Certificates, Wills and Personal Papers, 1755–1908'.

This series includes evidence presented to the Chelsea Hospital in support of the pension claim. It is fascinating and informative, and clearly sets you on the path to further discoveries.

It contains certified extracts from the baptismal register of Lichfield Cathedral for several children, among whom was, on 9 August 1822, Edwin Frederick son of William and Mary Ann Jones of Cathedral Close. His father was a lieutenant in the Army.

There is some discrepancy in the dates when compared with the Chelsea Hospital ledger, and I checked this by consulting the original Lichfield Cathedral records for baptisms in The Close, historic buildings surrounding the cathedral. Christenings there appear to have been reserved mostly for the military, local officials and clergy.

Further baptisms for children of this couple appear in 1826 and 1827 at St Michael's Church, Lichfield, and for the daughter mentioned in the Chelsea Hospital record, Amelia Ann, who was baptised in Maidstone, Kent.

Any doubts that this was the correct lineage can be dispelled. This source includes a marriage in St Bride's, London, for the parents, William Jones of this parish and Mary Ann Finnis of the same, on 23 August 1803.

There is a certificate from the Lichfield parish clerk declaring that Lieutenant Jones died from "disease in the head" on 11 February 1829. This leads to evidence of his origins with a record showing he was baptised at St Martin, Birmingham, Warwickshire, on 21 August 1775 of William, son of William and Sarah Jones.

Clearly, his widow had gathered all of this information together. Some was superfluous to her needs, but her diligence has provided you with a wonderful collection of family documentation, culminating in the application to be placed on the pension list by way of the King's Royal Bounty to provide for her and her children in the absence of other means of support.

Incidentally, an error on the application has "4th Royal Regiment of" scored out and "2 Royal Veteran Battalion" entered. The 2nd Royal Veteran Battalion was for injured soldiers who could continue to serve in a mainly clerical and administrative role. It may be worth searching to see in which engagement William received his injury, presumably during the Napoleonic Wars.

Steve Thomas

What can you tell me about John's army career?

Q This photo shows my wife's great grandfather, John Scholes (1859–1931), far right. His grandchildren didn't know that he'd served in the Army – he spent most of his life in Leeds and was a publican. Any information you can give would be appreciated.
Mike Fletcher

A It's an interesting photograph. The cap badge, the Royal Arms, was first worn by the Royal Reserve Regiments (1900–1901), then the Royal Garrison Regiment, formed 1901, but disbanded in 1908. In 1914, it became the cap badge for General List officers, but we're not looking at officers here.

In early 1917, the Army Council issued Instruction 611 ordering the amalgamation of existing Labour units into new companies of the Labour Corps and, importantly, "all Warrant Officers and NCOs serving in those units… who were required in the new structure would be transferred to the Labour Corps". It also stated "men of the Labour Corps would wear the 'Royal Arms' as a cap badge".

As John was a staff sergeant, I looked for previous military service. Several John Scholes emerged, but none appeared likely and I couldn't find a Medal Index Card. Probably he enlisted voluntarily or was a Territorial soldier deemed too old for active service, so served in an early Labour unit at home. His job would have given him valuable experience in dealing with men and paperwork!

Almost all Labour Corps records were destroyed by fire in 1940, but the book *No Labour, No Battle: Military Labour During the First World War* by John Starling and Ivor Lee (History Press, 2014) may help.
Phil Tomaselli

1 CAP BADGE
The General Service cap badge's shield has the emblems of the kingdom's four countries supported by a lion and unicorn rampant, lion and crown above and scroll below.

2 ABSENCE OF MEDALS
Soldiers should always wear their medals or display their ribbons. None of these men do, not even long-service medals. The younger ones might be conscripts, but John, born 1859, must have been a volunteer.

3 RANK INSIGNIA
The crown above three chevrons shows that John is a staff sergeant, a senior non-commissioned officer in a company.

4 TUNIC
The lack of pocket pleats shows that the tunic was made in 1915 – as was the snake-buckle belt, but both probably continued in use in Home-based units for much longer.

5 RIDING BRITCHES
All three men wear riding britches. It's been suggested that they were Royal Mounted Police, but the badge is definitely wrong. Possibly riding a horse allowed greater supervision of their men at work.

Celebrating Croxley Green

Rosemary Collins meets a local historian who has been recording a Hertfordshire village's heritage since 1993

Patients and nurses from the Dickinson Institute on New Road, a Voluntary Aid Detachment hospital during the First World War

During the course of the 19th century the village of Croxley Green in rural Hertfordshire experienced dramatic and unprecedented growth. These days it is a suburb of Rickmansworth.

In 1993 Margaret Pomfret, then a parish councillor in the village, project-managed a parish map for Croxley Green. It sold 2,000 copies in the first year. "From that I started to get interested in the area more," Margaret explains. "Books barely mentioned Croxley Green, so I put a small display in the library, and printed some leaflets asking people to contact me."

She started interviewing local people about Croxley Green's history and collecting written accounts, photos and memorabilia, with the aim of the parish council publishing a book. When the book didn't happen, Margaret ended up keeping hold of the research until 2015, when she rejoined the local Residents' Association and they came up with the idea of publishing her work online. The Croxley Green History Project website (**croxleygreenhistory.co.uk**) now covers an impressive variety of topics.

One local man is thought to have been the inspiration behind 'Q'

Margaret reveals that what she finds most interesting about Croxley Green's history is "how people could come and get together, and make a life and intertwine with each other".

The village began to grow at the start of the Industrial Revolution, after John Dickinson, who had modernised paper manufacturing, opened a mill there in 1830, attracting people to the area to work. "They had all sorts of activities going on that John Dickinson supplied, including musicals and dances."

The London and North Western Railway opened a station at Croxley Green in 1912, and the Metropolitan line arrived in 1925. Once the village became connected to the rail network, she says, "There was another big influx in the 1930s, with vast tracts of land being sold and new housing estates that were huge for the time. Everybody came together and even in the first years, when the communities were relatively new, there were lovely big celebrations, accompanying George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935 for example."

Now, the Croxley Green History Project team is bringing people together in the 21st century. In 2018 it produced posters containing the names of local men who had been killed in the First World War to mark the centenary of the end of the conflict, and residents of the properties they once lived in displayed the posters in their windows.

The project has also worked with local schools, featured in a local magazine and developed a walking route along the village's historic boundaries.

The project has also spread further afield. Its material has been used in a GCSE textbook about the First World War, publications exploring the history of the railways, and at the London Museum Docklands. The team even helped the International Spy Museum in Washington DC, USA, with an exhibition about Charles Fraser-Smith. This Croxley Green man worked for British Intelligence during the Second World War, developing spy equipment concealed in everyday items, and is thought to have been the inspiration behind 'Q' in Ian Fleming's James Bond novels. You can read more about his remarkable achievements, and see photos of some of his gadgets, at **croxleygreenhistory.co.uk/charles-fraser-smith.html**.

Margaret emphasises that the project is still looking for new material: "We want everything we can find that's available, so that it's preserved for the future and easily accessible rather than getting lost. I often contact people who tell me that their family's got a garage full of stuff that they're about to throw away. I tell them, 'Don't do that! We'll have it!'"

TELL YOUR STORY

Share your local history project with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *rosemary.collins@ourmedia.co.uk*

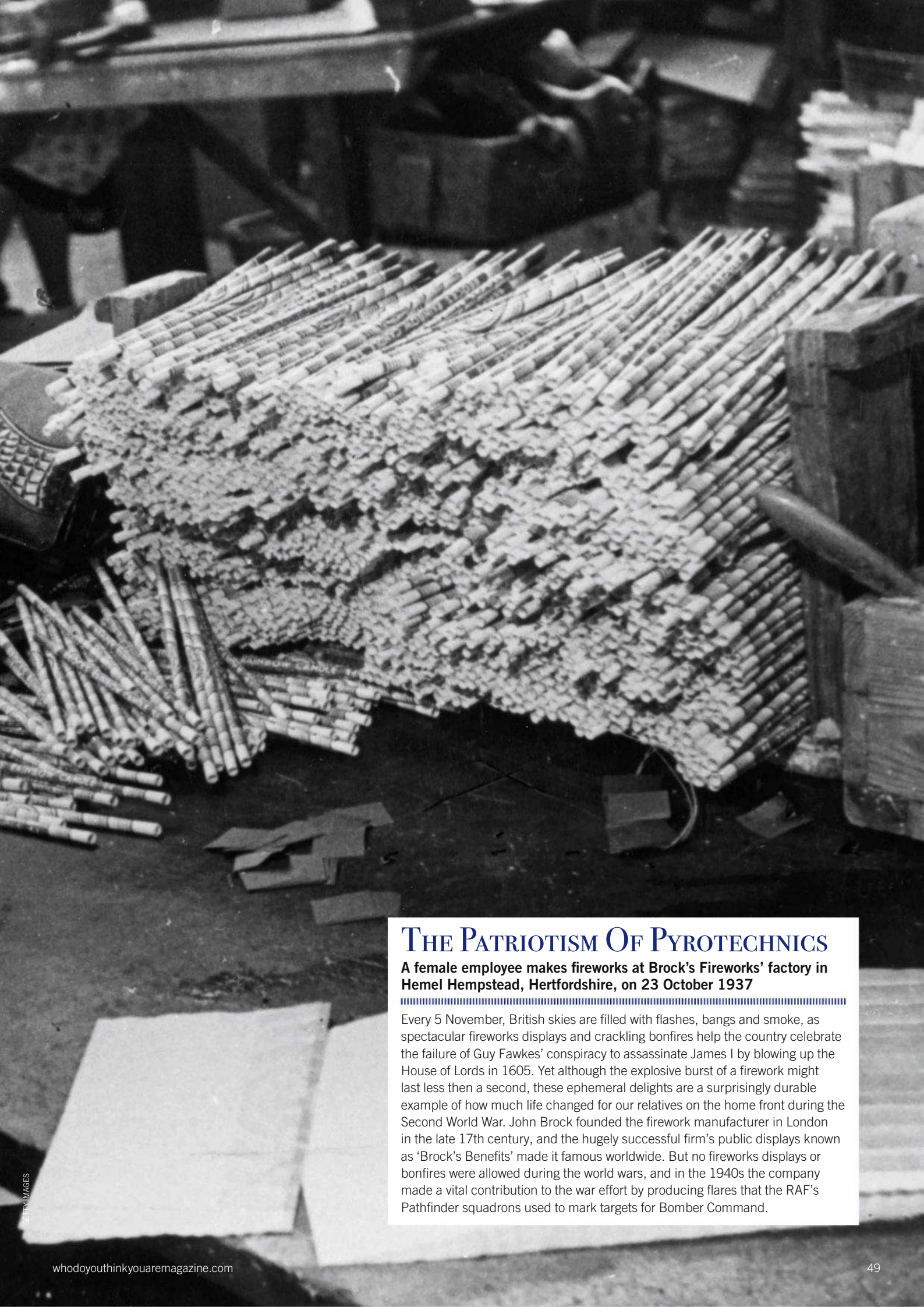
Get Involved

Croxley Green History Project
w **croxleygreenhistory.co.uk/contact.html**

If you have any old photographs, slides, video footage or cine film depicting the village, please get in touch using the contact form on the website. You can use the same online form to upload digital files.

THE BIG PICTURE

Celebrating our ancestors caught on camera

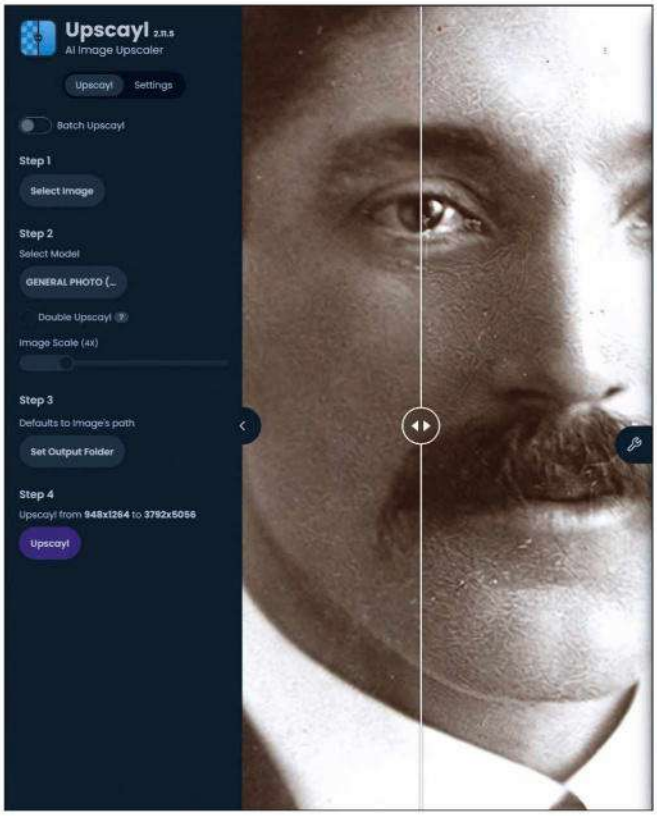


The Patriotism Of Pyrotechnics

A female employee makes fireworks at Brock's Fireworks' factory in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, on 23 October 1937

Every 5 November, British skies are filled with flashes, bangs and smoke, as spectacular fireworks displays and crackling bonfires help the country celebrate the failure of Guy Fawkes' conspiracy to assassinate James I by blowing up the House of Lords in 1605. Yet although the explosive burst of a firework might last less then a second, these ephemeral delights are a surprisingly durable example of how much life changed for our relatives on the home front during the Second World War. John Brock founded the firework manufacturer in London in the late 17th century, and the hugely successful firm's public displays known as 'Brock's Benefits' made it famous worldwide. But no fireworks displays or bonfires were allowed during the world wars, and in the 1940s the company made a vital contribution to the war effort by producing flares that the RAF's Pathfinder squadrons used to mark targets for Bomber Command.

GETTY IMAGES



Resize old photographs with Upscayl for free

Nick Peers reveals how to blow up your family photos using the power of AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) is all the rage these days, and in the field of family history its major benefits include helping us restore and colourise old photos. Many of these services are tied into so-called 'neural networks', online computers constantly learning and refining these techniques in a process more accurately described as 'machine learning' rather than true artificial intelligence.

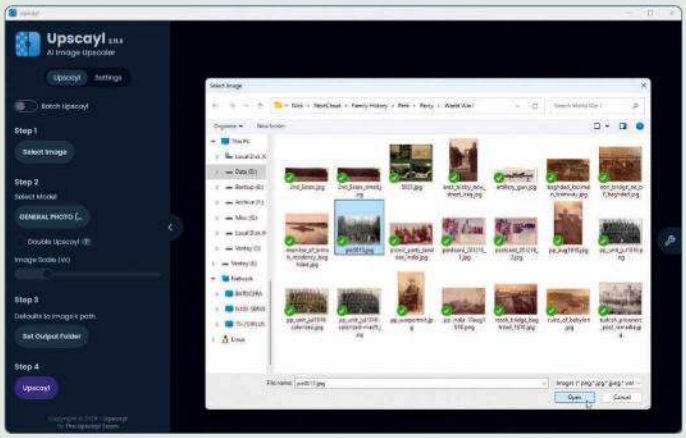
Many of these services cost money – typically because you're uploading photos to the cloud, where a third-party computer processes them. However, if you're willing to deploy your own computer's hardware resources instead, you can use some of these AI photo tools for free.

These tools are often used to make pictures larger, from scans of passport-sized photos to low-resolution, out-of-copyright historic photographs sourced online. Sadly the lack of detail in the original image often means that regular photo editors produce blurred or pixelated results.

This is where Upscayl (**upscayl.org**) comes into play. This free tool for Windows, Mac and Linux makes use of AI to intelligently fill in the gaps and keep photos looking their best even when blown up. In this month's 'Tech Tips', we reveal how to use it to deliver results that are genuinely amazing.

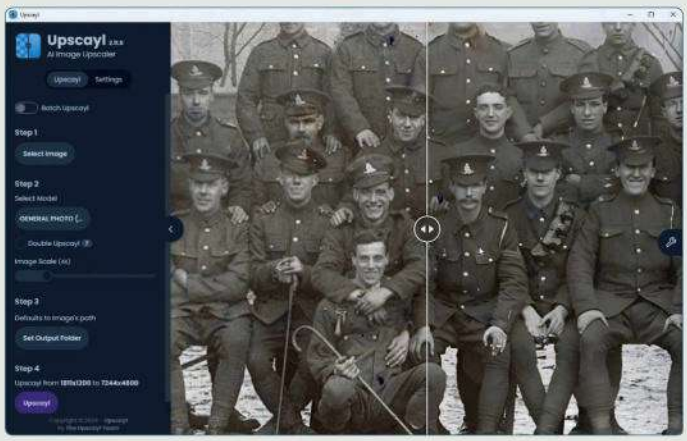
TOP TIP!

In the rare event you get an error about unsupported graphics (only a problem for very old PCs), a workaround is explained at **github.com/orgs/upscayl/discussions/580**.

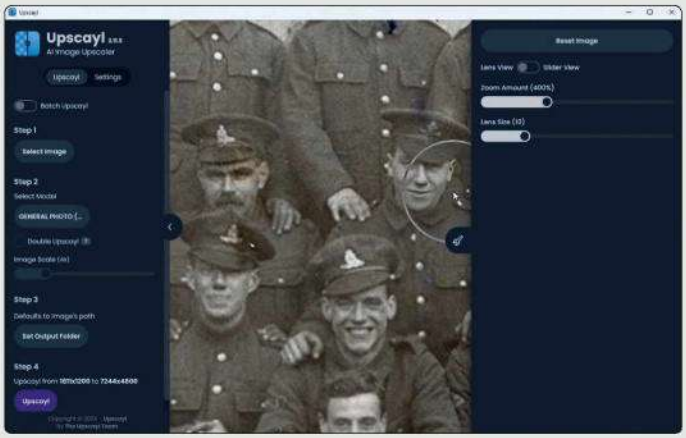


1 Install Upscayl Go to **upscayl.org/download** and download the correct version for your computer's operating system (Linux, macOS or Windows). After installing it, launch the program. Start by clicking 'Select Image' under Step 1 on the left of the program window to upload your photo in PNG or JPG format.

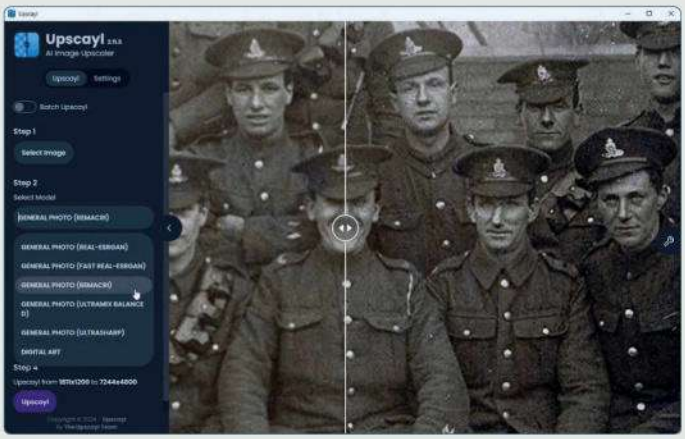
2 Upscale With One Click Upscayl offers a choice of neural engines called 'AI models' that resize an image in visibly different ways. Start by leaving the default model – General Photo (Real-Esrgan) – selected. Also leave the 'Image Scale' setting at its 4x default to quadruple the size of your photo. Then click the 'Upscayl' button.



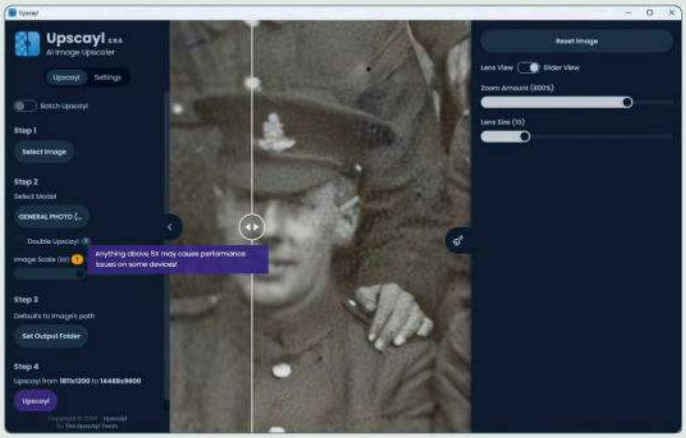
3 Review The Results Wait for the progress indicator to reach 100 per cent. Once complete, a copy of the resized photo is saved in the same folder as the original. The preview window is split in two, with the original image on the left, and the upscaled image on the right. Roll your mouse over the preview to compare the two.



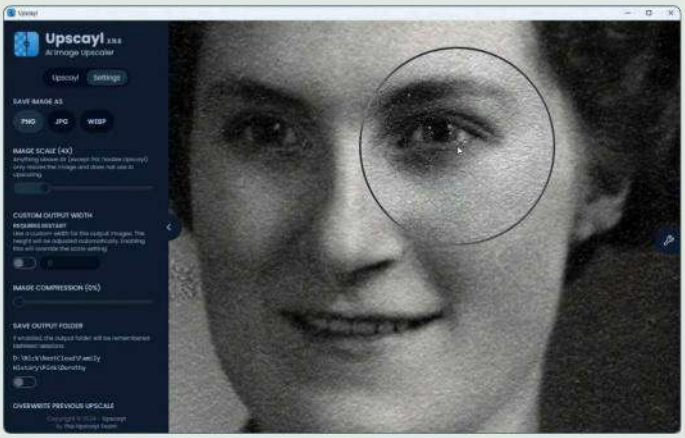
4 Tweak The Review Settings Drag the slider left and right to compare the two versions of the photo. Click the spanner icon on the right to reveal options for increasing the zoom factor (200 per cent by default) or replacing the slider with a lens that shows the upscaled version inside it when dragged over the image.



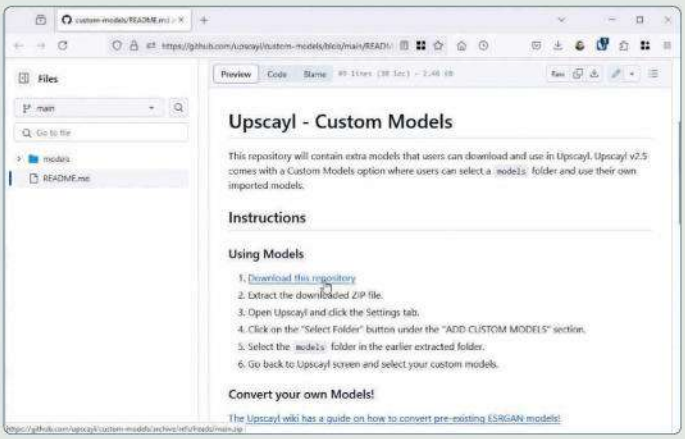
5 Change The AI Model Although the default AI model delivers superficially pleasing results, when you examine the upscaled photo up close you'll probably see that faces appear waxy and 'sculpted'. Resolve this by selecting a different AI model from the dropdown menu – we suggest Remacri – and clicking 'Upscayl' again.



6 Increase The Scale Factor You can also attempt to blow up photos up to 16 times their original size using Upscayl's 'Image Scale' slider, although if you try 6x or larger, you'll see a warning icon. Click this to reveal how older, less powerful PCs may be unable to cope with the extra demands.



7 Access More Settings Select 'Settings' and you'll access various advanced settings, including an option to change the default file type (PNG, JPG or WebP) of saved files. You can also set a custom output width if you'd prefer to scale to a specific size rather than by a set amount. Scroll down to reveal more settings.



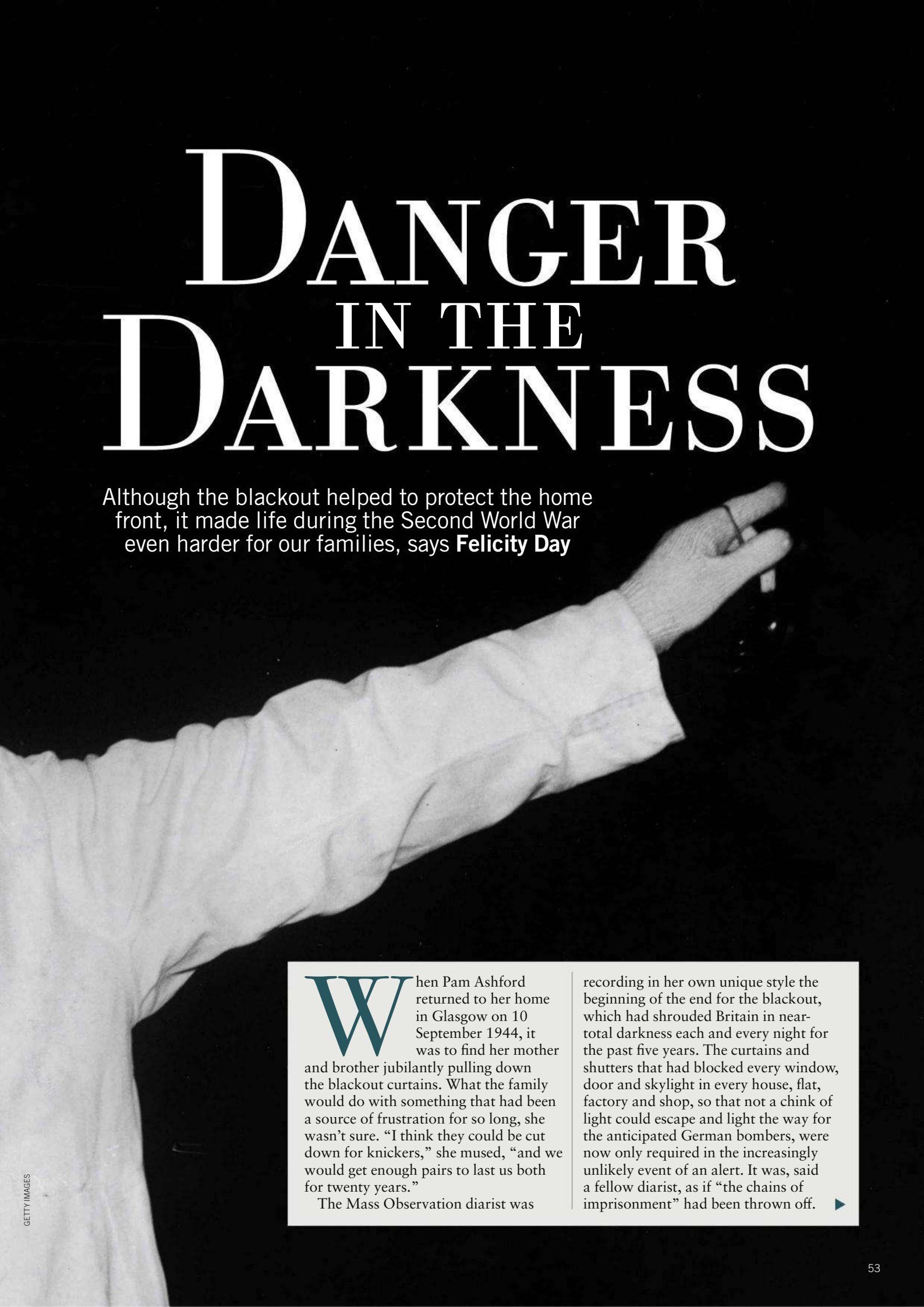
8 Download More AI Models If you don't like the results of any of the AI models included with Upscayl, click the 'Custom Models Repository' link in 'Settings' to open a web page in your browser. Click the 'Download this repository' link and save the file 'main.zip' to your hard drive – it's around 300MB, so be patient.

9 Import The New Models Decompress main.zip and extract the 'models' folder inside to a suitable location on your hard disk, eg your 'Photos' folder. Switch to 'Settings' in Upscayl and click 'Select Folder' under 'Add Custom Models' to add it. The models now appear in the 'Select Model' dropdown of the main 'Upscayl' section.

A police officer on traffic duty in Salford, Lancashire, during the blackout wears a long white coat and a helmet with an illuminated sign, 11 January 1940

Danger in the Darkness

Although the blackout helped to protect the home front, it made life during the Second World War even harder for our families, says **Felicity Day**



When Pam Ashford returned to her home in Glasgow on 10 September 1944, it was to find her mother and brother jubilantly pulling down the blackout curtains. What the family would do with something that had been a source of frustration for so long, she wasn't sure. "I think they could be cut down for knickers," she mused, "and we would get enough pairs to last us both for twenty years."

The Mass Observation diarist was recording in her own unique style the beginning of the end for the blackout, which had shrouded Britain in near-total darkness each and every night for the past five years. The curtains and shutters that had blocked every window, door and skylight in every house, flat, factory and shop, so that not a chink of light could escape and light the way for the anticipated German bombers, were now only required in the increasingly unlikely event of an alert. It was, said a fellow diarist, as if "the chains of imprisonment" had been thrown off. ▶

GETTY IMAGES

The comprehensive blackout of Britain's lights had been imposed for the first time on 1 September 1939, two days before war was declared on Nazi Germany. Trials had convinced the Government of its necessity in frustrating the efforts of the Luftwaffe's pilots to locate their ground targets.

It was the first noticeable impact of the conflict on the home front, and the creation of thick curtains or cardboard screens, the army of more than one million Air Raid Precautions (ARP) wardens who patrolled the streets at night, famously shouting "Put that light out!" whenever they spotted a breach of the blackout. In the earliest days, even lighting a match was sufficient to earn a fine. The majority of Britons complied with the rules, believing that a failure to do so would put both themselves and their community at risk, but it was the measure that they hated most. In

On busy pavements you navigated a veritable assault course of unseen hazards

the sourcing of spare blankets or bedspreads to pin up at the windows, or even the daubing of black paint over the glass was many civilians' first contribution to the war effort. It was both an unappreciated cost and an ongoing chore; 'blacking out' a home every evening could take anywhere from 5 to 45 minutes.

A Visit From The Warden

Failure to do it – or to let the merest glimmer of light leak out – would result in a knock on the door and stern words from one of surveys, the blackout consistently topped the list of the worst wartime inconveniences.

And no wonder. We might grumble when the clocks go back and the nights draw in, forcing us to close the curtains in the mid-afternoon, but the seasonal loss of evening light is nothing compared with the unremitting darkness – and countless difficulties – that the blackout brought night after night after night.

At first, no light whatsoever was allowed to show on the street after sunset, so if you stepped out of your front door, the darkness was so complete you couldn't see your hand in front of your face.

On the busy pavements of towns and cities you navigated a veritable assault course of unseen hazards, from other pedestrians to dog leads and umbrellas, letterboxes and lampposts. And if that made walking akin to a "perilous… game of blind-man's-buff", according to an article published in Kentish newspaper the *Faversham News* on 9 February 1940, then crossing the road was more like Russian roulette. Even if both your eyesight and hearing were first rate, it was all but impossible to see vehicles showing no headlights approaching, let alone judge their distance or speed. And it was certainly all too easy to find yourself hopelessly lost, even in a place you had lived in all your life.

Taking the bus was little better, for there was no knowing if you were hopping on the right one when their numbers were all unlit. You might even find the bus went sailing past the stop altogether if the driver failed to notice you. On the Tube the lights cut out the minute the carriage

Black-and-white stripes are painted on a lamppost in Leicester ahead of a trial blackout, 27 January 1938

GETTY IMAGES

Gordon Cummins 1914–1942

Meet the Blackout Ripper who terrorised wartime London

One of the most infamous murderers of the Second World War was dubbed the 'Blackout Ripper' for taking advantage of the dark nights to carry out his violent crimes.

Over the course of just six days in February 1942, 27-year-old trainee airman Gordon Cummins murdered and mutilated four women in London, and attempted to murder two more. His killing spree came to an end only after he was caught by a delivery boy in the act of strangling a further victim. Fleeing the scene, he left behind his RAF-issue gas mask and haversack complete with his regimental number, which led the police right to his door. At his billet, they discovered items that placed him at the scenes of the murders.

Born in Yorkshire and married since 1936, Cummins had long courted notoriety, claiming to be the illegitimate son of an aristocrat. He had cultivated a cut-glass accent, and had stolen funds to sustain the fantasy over a number of years.

He could only be tried for a single murder under the legal system of the time, but was found guilty of killing aspiring actress Evelyn Oatley, and hanged at Wandsworth Prison on 25 June 1942 in the middle of an air raid.

emerged above ground, making things difficult there too. "The District train is completely dark, and I nearly sit on someone's knee by mistake," one diarist wrote, describing a blacked-out journey. And driving on the road with only the white lines to guide your way was certainly a hair-raising experience, leaving motors bumped and battered.

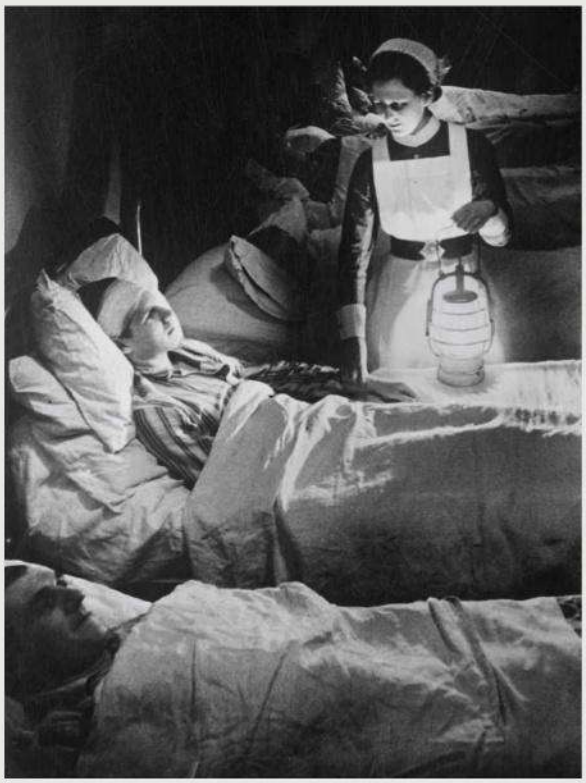
Death On The Roads

The immediate effects were alarming. Almost overnight, Britain's roads had become dramatically more threatening to life and limb. The number of road accidents rocketed in September 1939, with deaths more than doubling year-on-year to 1,130. Others died simply by taking wrong turns; one woman recalled a man in her local area whose mistake led him down a track to the canal. "He fell in and although his cries could be heard, he drowned before anyone could locate him," she reported. By January 1940, it was estimated that one in five people had suffered some sort of injury as a direct result of the blackout, whether that be from walking into a tree, tumbling out of a train door, or just tripping over a carpet in a room at home where the lights had been left off to avoid blacking out every window.

Fairly quickly, law-makers realised that it wasn't sensible to have people driving around with no headlights, so filters that let some light through a narrow horizontal slit were permitted, and soon after made compulsory. Car owners were also ordered to paint a white stripe along their bumpers, and to drive no faster than 20 mph – although since they couldn't see the unlit dial of their speedometer in the dark, that only added another difficulty.

Pedestrians were initially urged simply to wear or carry something white, but from October 1939 were permitted to use a torch, provided the beam was masked by tissue-paper and pointed at the ground. The introduction in 1940 of 'star lighting' – pinpricks of light directed downwards from streetlights – certainly helped to make journeys safer too. As did petrol rationing, which took plenty of cars off the road.

A Westminster Hospital nurse carries a lamp during the blackout, December 1940



GETTY IMAGES

Soaring Crime Rates

But it wasn't just accidents that made the blackout treacherous. There was also an associated increase in the number of crimes reported annually in England and Wales, which stood at 478,394 by 1945 – an increase of 57 per cent since the start of the war. Whether the statistics simply reflect greater awareness and reporting or an actual uptick in crimes, the cloak of darkness certainly did make it easier to loot bombed-out houses or burgle empty ones, to pick pockets or snatch handbags.

Women, especially, found themselves nervous about venturing out as reports of attempted assaults increased. It was nearly impossible to pick out a would-be attacker in the gloom, so "full of rustlings and whisperings, of half-seen shapes, and of a sinister feeling of eager, but invisible, life" as a journalist for the *Daily Herald* put it in April 1940. One Mass Observation diarist reported feeling "very shaken" after being followed off the bus by a man who walked right on her heels. "I turned and flashed my torch full in his face and then ran for home," she wrote, thankfully reaching it safely. Others were not so lucky (see the box).

The Houses of Parliament and Big Ben are bathed in floodlights on VE Day (8 May 1945)

For women who wanted to retain some form of social life – or had to commute in the evenings – it must have been a great relief when a decision was taken to introduce British Summer Time (BST) a few months early in 1940, and then not to put the clocks back an hour as usual to reinstate Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) when autumn arrived. BST became the default until the end of the war, making evenings lighter all year round. And they were even more so after 'Double Summer Time' was introduced in 1941, when the clocks advanced another hour each spring and went back an hour in the autumn.

Sometimes the workplaces they travelled to and from had their own blackout-related dangers. Many factories where constantly opening and closing shutters was not feasible opted for permanent solutions like painting over windows, so employees were stuck with artificial light all day and minimal ventilation – which, depending on the materials they were working with, could have disastrous effects on their health.

The Need To Stay Positive

Newspapers urged those who were depressed by the darkness or nervous about going out to look on the bright side, talking in upbeat tones about increased demand for pianos – "there is no better Home Entertainer" – and promoting everything from photography to rug-making to combat boredom. The BBC maintained that by "giving us back the stars" the blackout had actually done some good, scheduling programmes to encourage the growing numbers of amateur astronomers.

But with everything from fireworks to Christmas lights cancelled, evening outings made unappealing, and homes gloomy and airless thanks to the thick window coverings, the blackout "weigh[ed] down tremendously on public morale" according to diarist Edward Spedding, with ARP wardens the focus for much of the public resentment. Most on the home front just soldiered on, grumbling that if only "the lights were to go up again [then] people's spirits would soar".

The relaxation of the rules that came in September 1944, three months after D-Day, when an Allied victory looked increasingly likely, was greeted with delight by some, as in the Ashford household. Many others, fearing that it might be premature, waited to bin their blackout curtains or "make a bonfire of them" until restrictions were lifted altogether on 23 April 1945 – 15 days before VE Day. "How dependent one is on light," one woman wrote, reflecting back on the long years of darkness. "And how helpless one can feel without it."

FELICITY DAY is a historian. Her latest book is *The Game of Hearts: True Stories of Regency Romance* (Blink, 2024)

Resources

Take your research further

BOOKS

Wartime: Britain 1939–1945
Juliet Gardiner
Headline, 2004
Gardiner tells the story of life on the home front using the accounts of ordinary Britons.

We Are at War
Simon Garfield
Ebury, 2005
You can read more extracts from the diaries of Pam Ashford and others participating in Mass Observation in this collection.

PODCAST

Bad Women: Blackout Ripper
w **tinyurl.com/bbc-snds-blackout**
In series two of their podcast *Bad Women* historian Hallie Rubenhold and journalist Alice Fiennes raid the archives to tell the stories of Cummins' victims, providing fascinating context.

WEBSITES

BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE
w **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**
Newspapers are a rich source for public-information messages, and give a fascinating insight into the realities of the blackout.

BRITISH PATHÉ
w **britishpathe.com**
The free newsreel archive has a number of Ministry of Information films about the blackout. *I'll See You in the Morning (I Hope Not!)* (1941) features the Twerp family who ignore the rules (**tinyurl.com/bp-twerps**), while *Coming Shortly!* (1942) explains permitted lighting (**tinyurl.com/bp-shortly**).

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM
w **iwm.org.uk**
The wealth of material about the war on IWM's website includes a further MOI film *Dangers in the Dark* (1941), which gives a visual representation of conditions on the road during the blackout (**tinyurl.com/iwm-dark**).

GETTY IMAGES

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'Researching This Mystery Photo Led To A Big Surprise'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

Forty years ago, Jenny Wears was given a picture of an angelic infant. Establishing the young girl's identity and researching her life involved ingenious detective work and an amazing revelation, says **Gail Dixon**

Many of us have an 'Eleanor Rigby' on our family tree – a woman who seemed to lead an isolated life like the eponymous character of the song by The Beatles. Perhaps they preferred a quiet life, or weren't as lonely as Paul McCartney envisaged when he wrote the lyrics.

Jenny Wears discovered a 'lost cousin' who appeared to have little to do with family, but two records have challenged that. Jenny tells her story.

JENNY WEARS is a retired nurse who lives in Suffolk. She has been researching her family history for 44 years

My Brick Wall

In the early 1980s, my husband Denis' elderly aunt Marjorie gave us a photograph of a toddler sitting on the lap of an older woman. Marjorie told us that the girl's name was Hadice, which seemed unusual. The photograph was put away for years, and the young girl never cropped up in conversation again.

I began researching Hadice in 2022 and discovered from her birth certificate that her real name was Haidee Marian Wood, and that she was born in 1895 at Maldon, Essex. Her father was William Wood, a railway engine driver, and her mother was Marian (née Pearson).

Tragically, Marian died in December of that year as a result of heart failure.

At some point between this and the 1901 census, Haidee was taken to live with her paternal grandmother Elizabeth Wood at Stanford Rivers in Essex, while William worked as an engine driver in London.

In 1897, William signed a contract to work for the East Indian Railway Company in Calcutta (now Kolkata), India.

Haidee was eight years old in 1903 when Elizabeth died. What happened to her?

My Detective Work

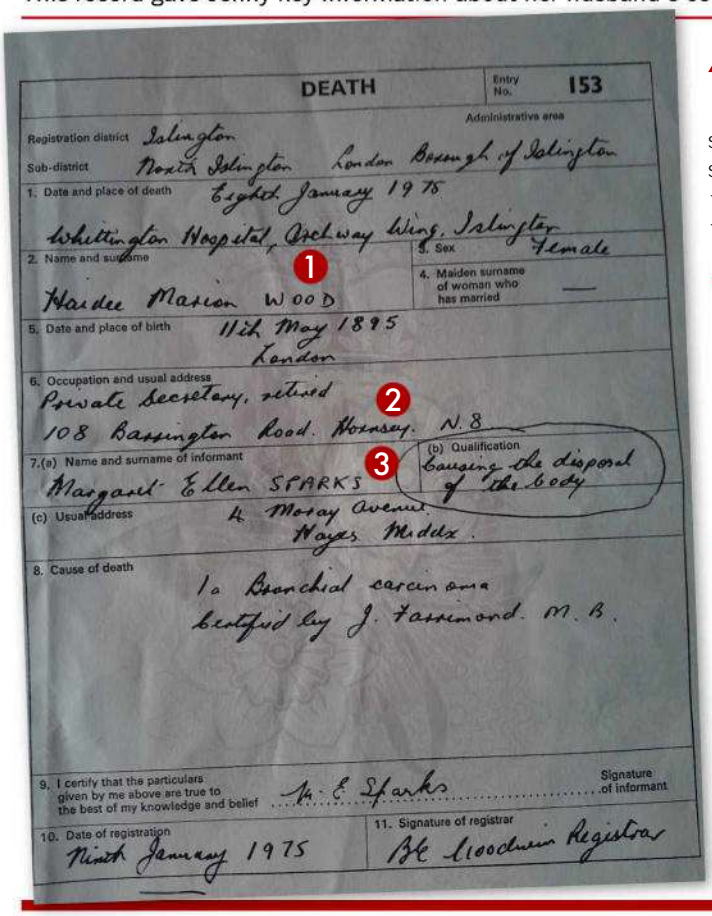
Haidee had an unusual name, which made the search a little easier. In the 1911 census, she was aged 15 and working as a servant for William and Emilee Carter, in Walthamstow, East London.

I searched for a possible

The mystery photo *(left)* depicting Elizabeth Wood with her granddaughter Haidee was given to Jenny and her husband by Haidee's cousin Marjory Wears *(above, on the right)*

Death Certificate, 1975

This record gave Jenny key information about her husband's cousin Haidee



DEATH

Entry No. 153

Registration district Islington

Administrative area

Sub-district North Islington London Borough of Islington

1. Date and place of death Eighth January 1975 Whittington Hospital, Archway Wing, Islington

2. Name and surname Haidee Marion WOOD

3. Sex Female

4. Maiden surname of woman who has married —

5. Date and place of birth 11th May 1895 London

6. Occupation and usual address Private Secretary, retired 108 Barrington Road. Hornsey. N.8

7.(a) Name and surname of informant Margaret Ellen SPARKS

(b) Qualification causing the disposal of the body

(c) Usual address 4 Moray Avenue Hayes Middx.

8. Cause of death 1a Bronchial carcinoma certified by J. Fassmond. M.B.

9. I certify that the particulars given by me above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief M. E. Sparks Signature of informant

10. Date of registration Ninth January 1975

11. Signature of registrar B. E. Woodman Registrar

1 Surname
Haidee had the same surname at death as when she was born. Along with the dash in Section 4 of the record, this suggests that she never married.

2 Usual Address
As well as the place where Haidee died, Whittington Hospital in Islington, the certificate records her "usual address": 108 Barrington Road in Hornsey.

3 Informant
The informant on a death certificate will often be a close relation of the deceased. In this case, however, it's likely that Margaret Ellen Sparks didn't know Haidee, and just worked for the local council.

marriage or death, and even looked to see if she'd been a volunteer nurse during the First World War. However, there were no records of Haidee until the 1921 census, when she was working as a shorthand typist and living in Black Boy Lane, Tottenham, North London. To my surprise and excitement, she was listed as a niece. Who were the aunt and uncle?

The head of the household was John G Reeves, a fine-art restorer who lived with his wife Ellen and two sons. I knew that William Wood had three sisters: my husband's maternal grandmother Caroline; Ellen; and Alice, who died as a child.

So, it was Aunt Ellen who was the family connection.

The 1939 Register showed that Haidee was still working as a shorthand typist and living in Hornchurch, Essex. She gave her age as 29, but was actually 44. Haidee was living with a married couple by the name of Smith, and there was no family link.

I searched electoral rolls and rate books to try to locate her over the next few decades, all to no avail. I wondered if she travelled to India to see her father, but nothing came up.

I know that Haidee didn't marry, because she still had her birth name on her death certificate in 1975. This gave me an address in Islington, North London. I contacted clubs and church groups in the area, but they couldn't find any connection to her. She seemed to disappear until her death at Whittington Hospital, Islington.

The death certificate reinforced the 'lonely old lady' picture I'd created. The informant was a Margaret Ellen Sparks, who gave no relationship to Haidee and was tasked with "causing the disposal of the body" – an awful phrase.

I contacted the registrar whom I'd requested the death certificate from, and he told me that someone from the council acts as a death informant when there's nobody else to do so.

My Eureka Moment

I decided to trace William Wood, Haidee's father, and found him not in India but Walthamstow and Leytonstone in East London in 1939. He had married a woman called Eleanor Tunks in Asansol, West Bengal, in 1902.

William and Eleanor didn't appear on the 1921 census, so I assumed that they were still in India. However, in the 1939 Register their address was 37 Roland Road, Walthamstow, so they were living just a few miles from Haidee in Hornchurch.

Eleanor died in 1950 and William in 1955, which led to the discovery of a probate notice, as well as a big surprise.

The record revealed that he left his estate of £2,980 to Haidee Marian Wood, spinster. So, it's possible that father and daughter had managed to keep in touch after all, Islington being just a few miles away.

I believe that the mysterious photograph shows Haidee with her grandmother Elizabeth Wood. Perhaps William wanted to have a picture of his mother and daughter that he could take with him to India. I'm very pleased to have 'found' Haidee and discovered so much information about her life.

HAVE YOU BROKEN THROUGH A BRICK WALL?

Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

Reader Tips

Jenny has this advice for other readers of *WDYTYA? Magazine*

- Ask your relations everything you can about your old family photographs, and don't just put them to one side.
- Contact possible social connections, clubs or church groups that would have been local to the forebear whose life you're researching.
- Probate records can reveal so much about our ancestors.

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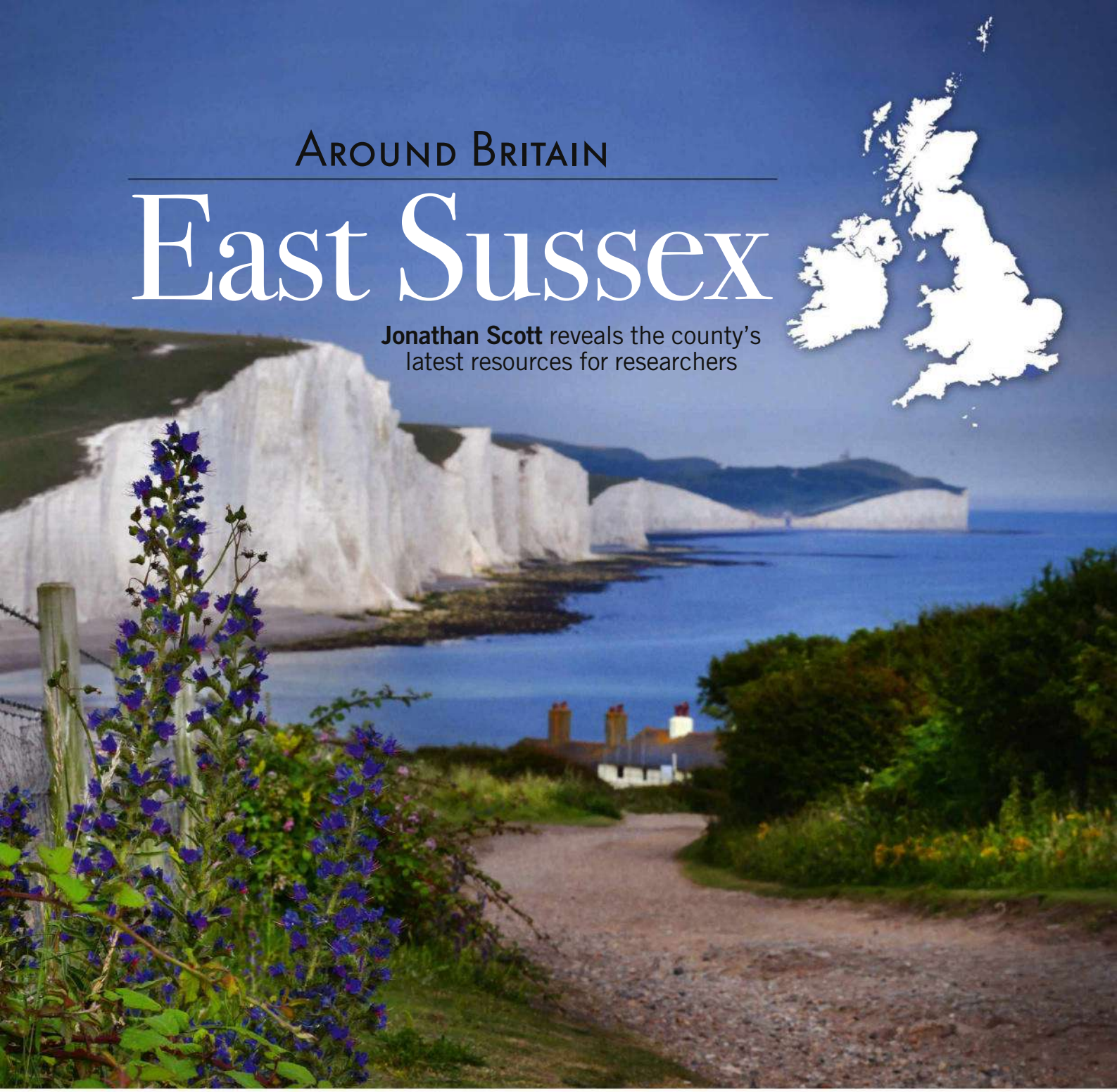
East Sussex

Jonathan Scott reveals the county's latest resources for researchers



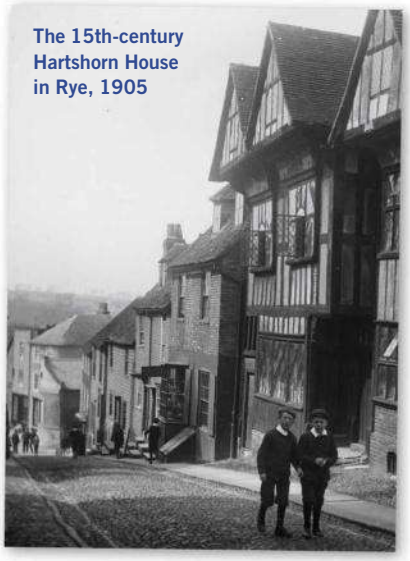
Researchers on the trail of East Sussex kin need to familiarise themselves with The Keep in Brighton (**thekeep.info**). This is home to a series of important genealogical collections and local-history material for both East Sussex and Brighton and Hove, alongside artefacts of national significance.

The oldest English document held here dates from the start of the 12th century, when Henry I granted the abbot of the Church of St Martin in Battle the royal privilege of being able to hear pleas against his tenants in his own court. Another old relic is the tooth of Gundrada de Warenne who died in 1085 – wife of the Norman baron William de Warenne, 1st Earl of Surrey, the founder of Lewes Priory and builder of Lewes Castle. Elsewhere there's a one-off census carried out by Rye officials in 1571, noting all local "strangers" (foreigners), including a list of members of the French Church who are described as being "of very honest behaviour".

Rye was once a small coastal fishing community – the sea has since retreated two miles from the town – which eventually became part of the confederation of Cinque Ports. These were coastal towns, mainly in Kent and Sussex, that in return for providing ships for the Crown received various privileges. These included exemptions from certain taxes, jurisdiction over criminality and civil cases, and rights to the cargo of wrecked ships. The name was Old French for 'five harbours', the original members being Hastings, New Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich. These were eventually joined by the likes of Rye. At its height in the Late Middle Ages, the confederation included more than 40 settlements.

The Seven Sisters, a series of chalk cliffs on the South Downs

GETTY IMAGES



The 15th-century Hartshorn House in Rye, 1905

Free Online Records

This month's selection of unmissable digitised resources comprises parish registers, tithe maps, wills, directories and photographs of gravestones

Directories
w **tinyurl.com/sco-suss**

The University of Leicester's online collection of digitised directories includes complete Sussex volumes from 1911 and 1915.

Parish Registers
w **freereg.org.uk**

This ever-growing database currently has details of 1,188,570 baptisms, 318,782 marriages and 754,678 burials from East and West Sussex.

Tithe Maps
w **tinyurl.com/east-suss-tithe**

You can explore digitised tithe maps and apportionments for East Sussex on the county council's website.

Gravestones
w **tinyurl.com/find-grave-east-suss**

The site Find a Grave (**findagrave.com**) includes photos of gravestones in local cemeteries. East Sussex is divided into Brighton and Hove, the boroughs of Eastbourne and Hastings, and the Lewes, Rother and Wealden districts.

Wills
w **sussex-opc.org**

You can trawl for surnames in East Sussex parishes in the long-running database Sussex Online Parish Clerks, including no fewer than 536 wills.

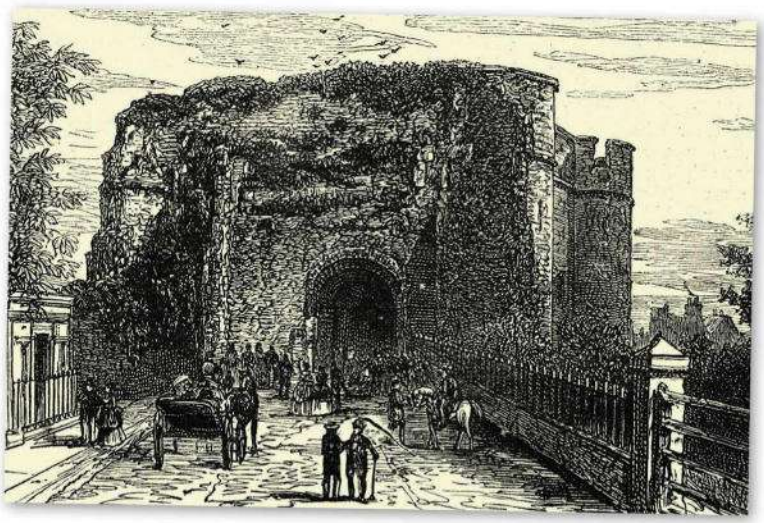
Last time we visited East Sussex in November 2020, parish records were gradually becoming more accessible. This was partly through years of work by groups of volunteers who had transcribed parish registers from all over the county, creating a huge database that was slowly being migrated over to the East Sussex online catalogue, which now contains many thousands of names.

Digitisation Milestone

Things took a big step forward in summer 2022 when Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) completed its digitisation of local parish records, launching more than 2.9 million East Sussex baptisms, marriages and burials from 1538–1812, as well as a further 2.8 million births and baptisms (1813–1920), alongside confirmations (1813–1927), marriages and banns (1754–1936), and deaths and burials (1813–1995). These collections featured in presenter Richard Osman's 2022 episode of *Who Do You Think You Are?*, recording the marriage of his 4x great grandparents Gabriel Gillam and Mary Shrivell in 1815.

Since our ancestors rarely paid much attention to boundaries, it's convenient that Ancestry has large collections of digitised material for West Sussex too, drawn from the West Sussex Record Office (**wsro.org.uk**) in Chichester. This means you can follow ancestral trails across the whole of Sussex through parish registers, Bishops' Transcripts and electoral registers. The East Sussex electoral collection (1705–1963), which launched in December 2022, contains some 20,425,086 records from across East Sussex and Brighton and Hove.

Elsewhere Findmypast has pre-1914 school admission registers for the area in the collection 'National School Admission Registers & Log-Books 1870–1914' (**search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/national-school-admission-registers-and-log-books-1870-1914**), and there are useful free finding aids, transcriptions and indexes available via Sussex Online Parish Clerks (**sussex-opc.org**) and FreeREG (**freereg.org.uk**). Finally, The Keep's own 'Guide to Church and Cemetery Registers' describes what is held here, from Anglican and cemetery records, to nonconformist church and chapel registers, Methodist circuit registers and Society of Friends' records; you can download it from **thekeep.info/collections/doing-family-history/**.



This engraving of the 11th-century Lewes Castle dates from the 1870s

GETTY IMAGES

Designed by Eugenius Birch, Brighton's West Pier opened in 1866 three years after construction began

Other collections at The Keep include wills and inventories, and building-control plans. There are also documents deposited by the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen, including merchant ships' agreements, crew lists and official logbooks from 1862–1914 – as well as crew agreements for fishing boats over 25 tons. There's material once held by the former Brighton History Centre, which includes a local-history library, as well as newspapers and electoral registers. You can dig through records that reflect the region's history of coastal tourism – such as the archives left by the West Pier Company in Brighton, Eastbourne Pier Company and the Brighton Aquarium. All three attractions were designed by prolific architect Eugenius Birch (1818–1884).

The Keep's own website is much improved, not least the new Online Collections area where staff can showcase rare documents, ephemera and images: **esccbhro.access.preservica.com**.

Archivist Andrew Bennett says, "This is a really exciting development for us. Although it currently contains only a small percentage of our overall holdings it's being added to every day, so is worth checking regularly."

You can explore coloured lantern slides of rural travellers from the 1920s; pages from local newspapers; records of the Sheffield Park Estate; glass-plate negatives; Brighton building plan index cards; and pages from the female pauper patient casebook at East Sussex County Asylum, later known as Hellingly Hospital.

TOP TIP!

Sussex Record Society has published more than 100 volumes of research about East and West Sussex. Many can be downloaded for free from its website at **tinyurl.com/srs-digital**.

Insights Into Poor Relief

Poor Law records offer unrivalled glimpses into the struggles of ordinary people. Through the Sussex Record Society, Andrew has published a book about the Mendicity Society, set up to oversee poor relief in Brighton (**tinyurl.com/srs-mendacity**): "It gives a good insight into the practicalities of living below the breadline in the 1870s, and shows how the system worked."

The Keep itself has settlement and removal orders, bastardy bonds and apprenticeship records.

Overseers' account books illustrate how parishes identified and cared for the sick, destitute or elderly. There's also guardians' records, registers of births and deaths in workhouses, and admission and discharge registers.

Andrew explains that teams of volunteers are currently working on registers from Hailsham Workhouse, and have so far extracted more than 17,000 names covering 1835–1862. You can trawl this data via the catalogue at **thekeep.info/collections/getrecord/GB179_G_5_14**; just click the 'Browse by Hierarchy' tab and + symbols to see more detailed entries. A similar project has been extracting the names of patients treated at Hellingly Hospital.

LOCAL INDUSTRY

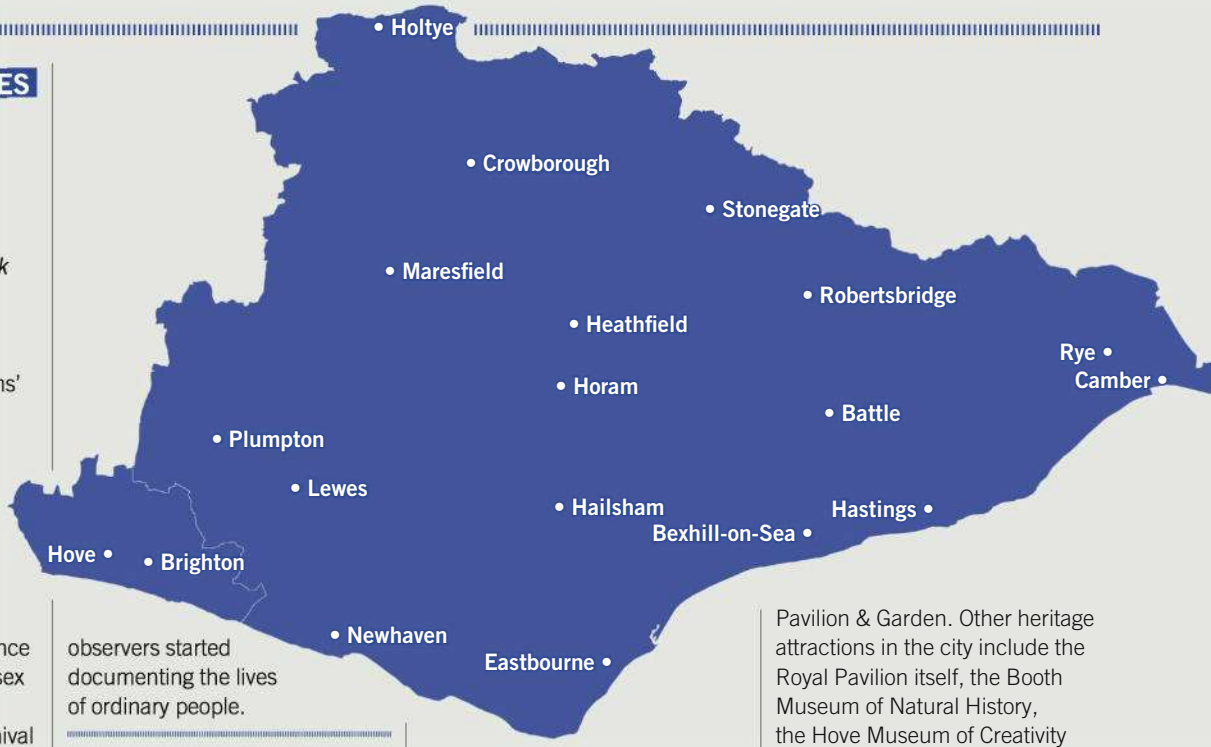
Brewing Did your 19th-century relation work for one of the many breweries in Lewes?

Harvey's Brewery in Lewes was built on the banks of the Ouse

The county town of Lewes has a proud history of brewing. Harvey's, which has operated since 1790, is still run by the eponymous family. It's the last survivor of a slew of breweries that flourished in the town in the 19th century, including Ballard & Co, Beard's, Lyells, Southdown, Verrall's and the Bear Yard Brewery. An excellent starting point for researching British brewing is the Brewery History Society's Brewerypedia, which is still growing but already contains 52,979 pages: **breweryhistory.com/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page**.

GETTY IMAGES

EAST SUSSEX DIRECTORY



ARCHIVES & LIBRARIES

East Sussex And Brighton And Hove Record Office

a **The Keep, Woollards Way, Brighton BN1 9BP**
t 01273 482349
e *thekeep@eastsussex.gov.uk*
w **thekeep.info**

The Keep houses not only the archives for East Sussex, but also Brighton & Hove Museums' collections and the University of Sussex Special Collections (see below). Via the Reference Room you can trawl resources for family and local history research, including computers giving free access to parish registers and maps. Just off the Reference Room is the library of the Sussex Family History Group (see below), and you can view archival material in the Reading Room.

East Sussex Libraries

w **https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/libraries/local/locations**

This is the best place to find out about local-studies collections at libraries across East Sussex, including those in Eastbourne and Bexhill-on-Sea. For West Sussex libraries see **tinyurl.com/west-sussex-gov-local-studies**.

University Of Sussex Special Collections

w **sussex.ac.uk/library/special-collections**

The Special Collections at The Keep include the university's own archives, the papers of Rudyard Kipling, material relating to the Bloomsbury Group, and the Mass Observation Archive. This dates back to 1937, when a team of observers started documenting the lives of ordinary people.

West Sussex Record Office

a **County Hall, Chichester PO19 1RN**
t 01243 753602
e *record.office@westsussex.gov.uk*
w **wsro.org.uk**

The record office holds parish registers, Bishops' Transcripts (for both West and East Sussex), census returns, General Register Office indexes, directories, poll books and electoral registers. It also preserves about 30,000 items relating to the Royal Sussex Regiment, including documents, diaries and photographs.

GROUPS & SOCIETIES

Eastbourne Local History Society

w **eastbournehistory.org.uk**

The website has an illustrated timeline of the resort town.

A fishing boat on the shore at Hastings in 1864

GETTY IMAGES

Family Roots: Family History Society For Eastbourne & District

w **eastbournefhs.org.uk**

Founded in 1986, the group covers parishes around Eastbourne, including Heathfield, Ringmer and Pevensey.

Sussex Family History Group

w **sfhg.org.uk**

The group's library and research centre is at The Keep in Brighton. The website includes lots of free material, as well as indexes and databases available to members.

Sussex Record Society

w **sussexrecordsociety.org**

The society has been publishing volumes of historical records since it was founded in 1901.

MUSEUMS

Bexhill Museum

a **Egerton Road, Bexhill-on-Sea TN39 3HL**
t 01424 222058
e *info@bexhillmuseum.org.uk*
w **bexhillmuseum.org.uk**

Comic Eddie Izzard (also known as Suzy Izzard) is the patron of this atmospheric museum.

Brighton & Hove Museums

w **brightonmuseums.org.uk**

Brighton Museum & Art Gallery, which was due to reopen on 14 September 2024, is in the Royal Pavilion & Garden. Other heritage attractions in the city include the Royal Pavilion itself, the Booth Museum of Natural History, the Hove Museum of Creativity and Preston Manor & Gardens. The city museums' local-history material including prints, photos, artefacts, textiles, art, pamphlets and maps is now located at The Keep, as is the Sussex Collection of books, documents, journals, newspapers and ephemera.

Hastings Museum And Art Gallery

a **John's Place, Bohemia Road, Hastings TN34 1ET**
t 01424 451052
w **hmag.org.uk**

Directories, books and photos are in the Local Studies Room. Deeds and documents relating to businesses, services and organisations are in storage.

Heritage Eastbourne

a **The Beachy Head Story, Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne BN20 7YA**
t 01323 729926
w **visiteastbourne.com/heritage/collections**

You can find out about local-history and photographic collections here via **heritage eastbourne.online/local-history**.

WEBSITE

Ancestry

w **bit.ly/anc-locations-sussex**

The website's material from Sussex includes electoral, probate and parish records.

Petition for aid, 1667/8

Yaye Tang from Cambridgeshire Archives shares an injured man's petition for aid in 17th-century Ely Interview By Rosemary Collins

Before the creation of the welfare state many of our ancestors turned to private charity in hard times, and in the Middle Ages it was common for wealthy Catholics to leave such bequests to help save their souls after death. In Ely, a charity set up by Thomas Parsons in the late 15th century to provide money for local people in need is still going today. Here Yaye Tang, archives assistant at Cambridgeshire Archives, shares a poignant document from the collections – a petition by a man seeking money to treat a leg injury.

What Is The Petition?

The petition is one of many from our records of Thomas Parsons' Charity (**thomasparsonscharity.org.uk**). It is dated between 1667 and 1668, and is written on behalf of "a poore younge yeouth of Trinitie parrish in Ely", Robert Wright, who needed financial assistance to pay for a surgeon to save his injured leg from amputation: "by evill chance about three yeeres since the poore petitioner gott a cut on his legg with a spade which hath never since beene healed but doth now growe worse & worse soe that the poore petitioner is in greate danger to have his legg cutt off except the cure thereof be speedily taken in hand and followed by some very skillfull shyrurgion. And now one Mr Anthonie of Ely haveing seene the poore petitioners legg is willing to take it in hand… for his paynes Being willing to undertake the cure for three pounds… which money the poore petitioner can by noe means procure except your worshipps shall be graciously pleased to take compassion of himself and to do this greate good for him".

On the reverse of the document there are a few lines to reveal the charity's decision "to pay twentie shillings towards the cure of this petitioner". Unfortunately, we do not have a record of whether Mr Anthonie saved Robert's leg.

The charity was originally called The Governors of the Lands and Possessions of the Poor of the City or Town of Ely, and was formed in 1497 following the bequest of Thomas Parsons. Parsons' benevolence was motivated by his religious zeal, in particular "for the salvation of his soul and the souls of his relations". His will set up a trust that was to be administered by 12 feoffees (trustees) who were to be citizens of Ely, and were to serve for life or for so long as they resided there. The beneficiaries were to be needy and deserving inhabitants of Ely.

During the reign of Elizabeth I, a tax was imposed on personal property at a local level and much of the help given by the charity aided those inhabitants on whom this was levied. Eventually, when the tax was eased off, the charity found that it had surplus funds which the feoffees used to purchase properties in Ely for the employment, education and benefit of the local poor.

I chose this petition because it is a rich source of family history

Why Did You Choose It?

According to the data-gathering website Statista (**statista.com**), as of June 2024 there were 170,171 charities operating in England and Wales. How many of them were created in the 15th century? Probably not many! Thomas Parsons' Charity has been serving the needy in and around Ely for 527 years. The records have been impressively kept and maintained by the charity, including its royal charter of 1633 (granted by Charles I) which is on display at Ely Museum. One of the most notable feoffees was Oliver Cromwell who resided in Ely for several years, and copies of some of the letters he wrote are in the collection.

Aside from the age of the charity, I chose this petition because it is a rich source of family history. It gives an account of the petitioner, details of their need and the name of a local "skillfull" surgeon. In addition, the feoffees' response to the request is on the reverse of the petition. There are not many petitions that have survived from the 1600s that are in such excellent condition and where the handwriting is so clear. For anyone researching their family history, discovering a petition like this about their ancestor is to find a gem!

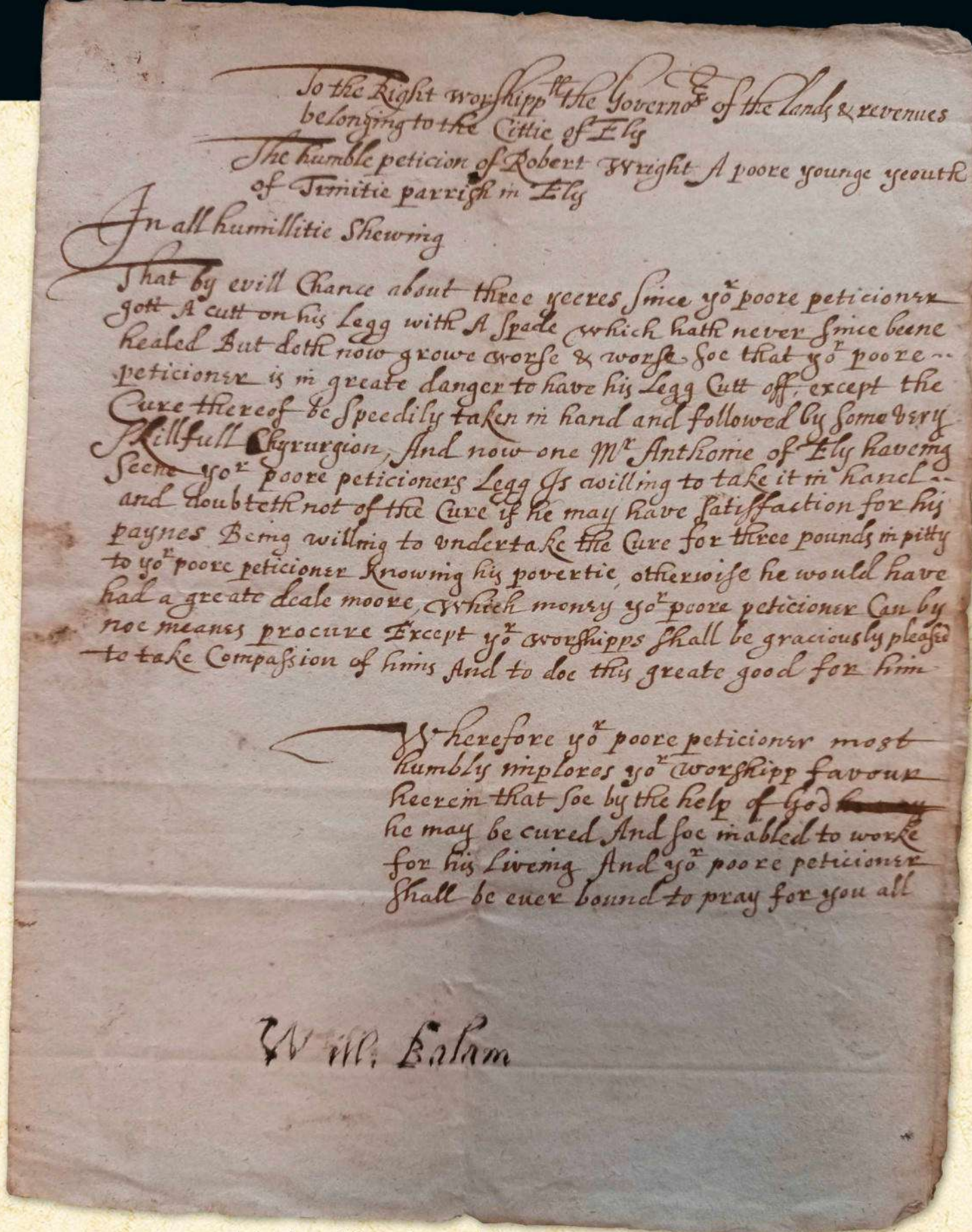
What Was Life In Ely Like At The Time?

Ely was impoverished because the surrounding fenland was marshland, making it impossible to cultivate. The natural diet was mainly river fish, especially eels. The damp and

Visit Us

Cambridgeshire Archives
a The Dock, Ely CB7 4GS
t 01223 699399
e *cambs.archives@cambridgeshire.gov.uk*
w **cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/libraries-leisure-culture/archives**

Cambridgeshire Archives holds records relating to the former counties of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely, and is open Tuesday to Thursday, 9.30am–12.45pm and 1.45pm–5pm. Visits are by appointment only. Cambridgeshire Archives also manages Huntingdonshire Archives (**tinyurl.com/cambs-hunt**).



To the Right worshipp^ll the Governo^r of the lands & revenues belonging to the Cittie of Ely

The humble petition of Robert Wright A poore younge yeouth of Trinitie parrish in Ely

In all humillitie Shewing

That by evill Chance about three yeeres Since yor poore peticionr gott A cutt on his Legg with A Spade which hath never Since beene healed But doth now growe worse & worse Soe that yor poore peticionr is in greate danger to have his Legg Cutt off, except the Cure thereof be Speedily taken in hand and followed by Some very Skillfull Chyrurgion, And now one Mr Antkome of Ely haveing Seene yor poore peticioners Legg Is willing to take it in hand and doubteth not of the Cure if he may have Satisfaction for his paynes Being willing to vndertake the Cure for three pounds in pitty to yor poore peticionr Knowing his povertie, otherwoise he would have had a greate deale moore, Which monny yor poore peticionr Can by noe meanes procure Except yor worshipps Shall be graciously pleased to take Compassion of him^s And to doe this greate good for him

Wherefore yor poore peticionr most humbly implores yor worshipp favour Heerein that Soe by the help of God he may be cured And Soe inabled to worke for his Liveing And yor poore peticionr Shall be euer bound to pray for you all

Will: Eaton

wet environment also meant that malaria was common – in fact it was named the fenland ague, referred to among the locals as marsh fever. The charity must have been very welcome for the residents as it sought to alleviate the suffering from poverty as seen in Robert's situation and those of many other petitioners.

What Other Material Does Your Archive Hold?

Staying with the Isle of Ely, our Poor Law records date back as far as the 1600s and include settlement papers, bastardy bonds and poor-relief tax. There is also New Poor Law material such as workhouse records, and petitions and enrolled title deeds containing individuals' names and locations from the Bedford Level Corporation, which drained the Fens.

Finally we hold minute books, witness statements, prosecution briefs and examinations from the 1816 Ely and Littleport Riots, protesting the high cost of living due to low wages and a tax levied for the Napoleonic Wars – 82 men were tried, of whom five were hanged.

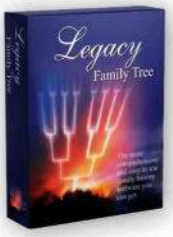
REVIEWS

The latest books on history and genealogy, plus apps, podcasts and websites

Legacy Family Tree 10

SOFTWARE

Free (after email registration),
legacyfamilytree.com



There was a time when Legacy was the most accessible family history software for your Windows PC, thanks in part to its surprisingly feature-rich free Standard Edition. Sadly, it's started to look dated because its user interface harks back to its glory days when Windows XP was cutting edge.

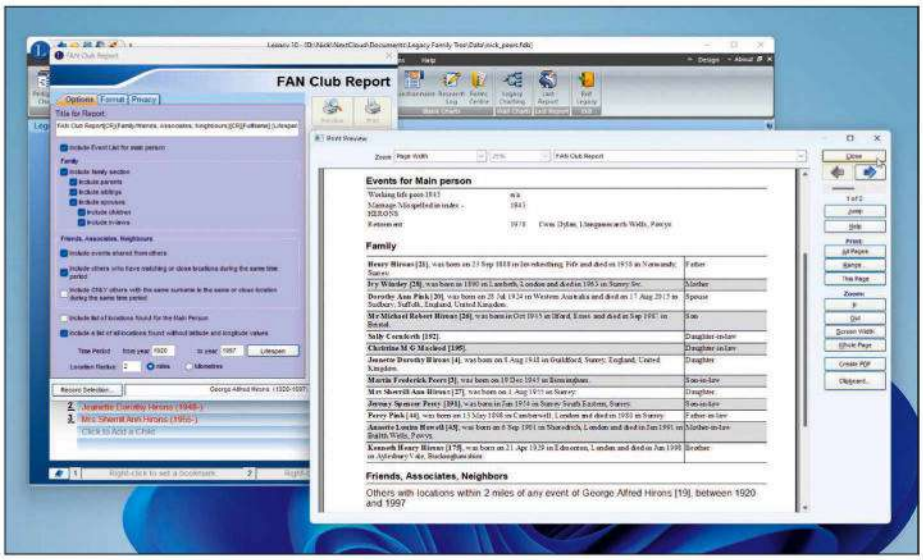
Legacy 10 does nothing to address this dated look, but it does have one major improvement to make it worthy of attention: it's now completely free to use. From version 10, all users gain access to features previously restricted to the Deluxe Edition such as unlimited wall charts, Research Guidance (a proto-AI feature that creates to-do lists for each of your ancestors) and historical timelines.

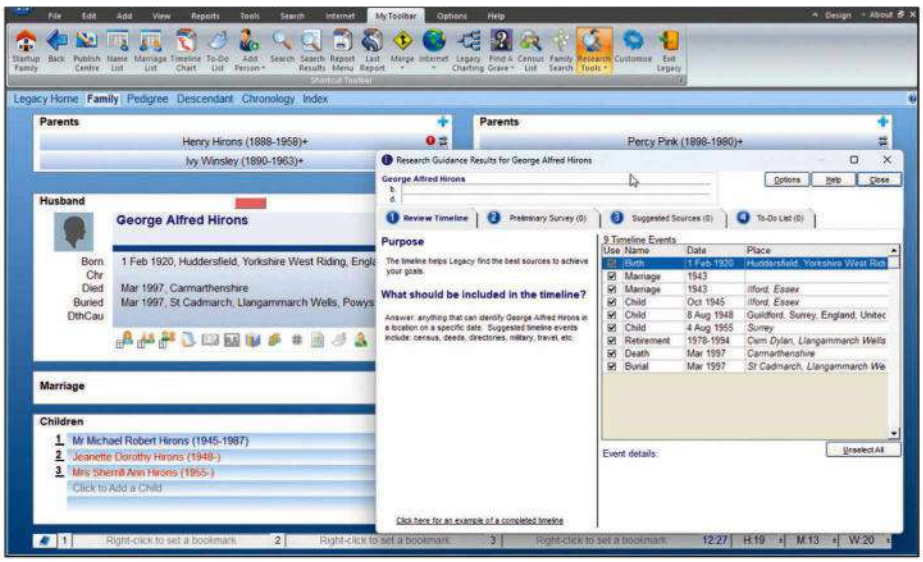
This makes Legacy 10 a must-have upgrade for existing users, but there are some new features added to show that MyHeritage (**myheritage.com**) hasn't abandoned all development of the product it acquired back in 2017. These include several new reports, such as a FAN Club Report listing a forebear's shared relationships, events and locations.

The optional Geo Location Database also gains a new button for viewing the selected place name on Google Maps (**google.co.uk/maps**) in your web browser – it's still a long way short of other apps' mapping tools, but a (small) step in the right direction. The Quick Access Toolbar has also been expanded to support up to 20 icons of your choice, and there's a new DNA section for storing the details of your family's DNA test results.

Sadly, these additions smack of incremental change rather than radical reinvention. Legacy gets away with it this time because the software is now completely free, but we fear that without more significant changes going forward, the program may find itself on its last legs as it slips further behind its rivals.

Nick Peers is a family historian and software expert, and writes *WDYTYA? Magazine*'s regular 'Tech Tips' articles





Top to bottom: the only change to Legacy 10's interface is support for more icons on the My Toolbar tab; the FAN Club Report reveals interesting connections in your tree; Legacy 10 makes all its features – including Research Guidance – free

DIGITAL PICKS

Rosemary Collins highlights three digital resources that caught our eye this month

WEBSITE

Essex Record Office Blog

essexrecordofficeblog.co.uk/

Here you can learn about some of the material held by Essex's county archive. At the time of writing, recent posts include a look at the collections of Edward 'Ted' Haley, who conducted oral history interviews with local residents between 1965 and 1989, and the diaries of Colchester Castle Museum curator EJ Rudsdale during the Second World War.

WATCH

Everyday Heritage

tinyurl.com/youtube-everyday-heritage

Heritage is not just castles, cathedrals and grand country houses. This series of short videos from Historic England looks at the history of ordinary people found in the places we pass every day. Recent themes include Romani Gypsy heritage in Suffolk, London's green cabmen's shelters, the landladies of Morecambe, and the fascinating story of the first women's club football match in 1895.

LISTEN

On The Spot

tinyurl.com/bbc-radio-4-on-the-spot

For football fans, the penalty kick is often the most dramatic moment of the game. But it was invented at the end of the 19th century by William McCrum, an amateur footballer from County Armagh. In this Radio 4 documentary, writer Robert McCrum traces his great grandfather's life.

GETTY IMAGES

Little Englanders

Britain In The Edwardian Era

EDWARDIAN BRITAIN

Alwyn Turner
Profile, 400 pages, £25

Alwyn Turner, writer of a series of books on 20th-century history, here turns his attention to the period between the death of Queen Victoria and the First World War.

In this history the administrators of empire feature less than the headliners at the Empire, Leicester Square. Music-hall entertainers ran the gauntlet from "The Fat Boy of Peckham" to Connie Gilchrist, an actor who married the 7th Earl of Orkney.

A steady theme is how everyday life is reflected in the music hall, from the newly distributed old-age pension to homely dinnertime – songs such as *Hot Meat Pies, Saveloys and Trotters* and *Good Old Yorkshire Pudden* reflect a society that had little interest in eating fresh fruit and vegetables.

Turner sees the Edwardian period as a gilded age, when the previous century's qualities were in decline and "the old Victorian values of self-help were transmuted into a creed of helping yourself". One of the most popular fictional heroes at the time was Raffles, a gentleman thief.

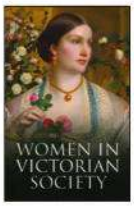
Written in an easy style, *Little Englanders* is crammed full of anecdote and information about how our Edwardian ancestors lived their everyday lives – including what made them laugh.

Jad Adams is a historian and author. His books include *Decadent Women* (Reaktion, 2023)

Reader Review YOUR CHANCE TO ASSESS THE LATEST BOOKS

Women In Victorian Society

Anne Louise Booth
Amberley, 288 pages, £22.99



This in-depth book covers a range of topics, focusing on how women responded to their role in an era steeped in androcentrism. The dynamics for change were already established and women challenged this patriarchal society in which their class and gender defined their future.

Education was all-important and emphasis is placed on the women who pioneered that change and, against all the odds, entered the all-male professions such as medicine, as well as the suffragettes who fought for the right to vote and the right of married women to retain their property.

Florence Nightingale, philanthropist Harriet, Duchess of Sutherland, and Constance Wilde (wife of Oscar) are portrayed as being particularly influential in matters of social and political change. The Rational Dress Society, women's magazines, sport, the liberating bicycle and literary figures like George Eliot are also included, as is Queen Victoria herself – a woman with ambiguous views on marriage, motherhood and obedience who ruled an empire.

SOCIAL HISTORY

The bicycle became an important symbol of Victorian women's growing freedom, such as this cyclist wearing plus fours

Rosemary Booth, Teignmouth, Devon
Rosemary is a retired nurse tutor. She has been researching her family history since 1971

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TV & RADIO

Jonathan Wright previews upcoming programmes on history and family history

A House Through Time: Two Cities At War

BBC Two and BBC iPlayer
October

David Olusoga stands outside 72 Pfalzburger Strasse, one of the properties in *A House Through Time*

It's easy to understand why *A House Through Time* has been so successful. Unless you live in a brand-new property, your home often gives you a sense of occupying spaces others have lived in, especially with older buildings. What did the previous residents cook? What did they talk about? What tragedies and joys played out? The past becomes domestic and personal.

Although the fundamental premise – tracing the stories of those who have lived in a building down the years – is unchanged for the latest series, the new episodes are far more ambitious than previous instalments. Not only do they find host David Olusoga researching two different blocks of flats, but these apartments are located in different cities: London and Berlin.

The focus is on three decades, from the Roaring Twenties through to the end of the Second World War. These were tumultuous years, encompassing the Great Depression, political extremism and civilian populations coming under direct attack. It's therefore no surprise that a sense of vast forces shaping individual lives is reflected in the stories of those we meet.

In the first of four episodes, for example, we learn how John Murray-Smith, who lived with his family in Montagu Mansions in Marylebone, was left physically and mentally shattered by his service in the First World War. Such experiences played into a national mood that the prime minister Lloyd George expressed unequivocally when he promised to "make Germany pay".

There were dangers in this approach. At 72 Pfalzburger Strasse in the inner-city borough of Wilmersdorf, artist Albert Henninger was similarly traumatised by his service. He also had to endure years when the German economy lay in devastation, in part because of reparations. The resulting resentment helped Hitler ensnare people into Nazism, including Albert's wife Lisi.

DNA Journey With Ancestry

ITV1 and ITVX
Autumn

Although no transmission dates had been announced as we went to press, a new series of *DNA Journey* is imminent. This time around, the celebrities teaming up to trace their family histories are *The Royle Family* stars Ricky Tomlinson and Sue Johnston; comedians Jo Brand and Julian Clary; actors Fay Ripley and Hermione Norris of *Cold Feet* fame; broadcasters Sam Thompson and Marvin Humes; Sarah Parish and James Nesbitt, who starred together in the Netflix series *Stay Close*; and John Simm and Philip Glenister, formerly best of frenemies in *Life on Mars*.

Also due this autumn and yet to have a transmission date confirmed, ITV1's *Long Lost Family: The Spanish Baby Scandal* explores a human-rights catastrophe with its roots in the General Franco era (1939–1975). During his military dictatorship thousands of newborns were taken from their mothers, notably women who were in prison, unmarried or thought to have left-wing sympathies, and given or sold to other families. The practice seems to have continued into the 1990s. Can the *Long Lost Family* experts help women who believe their children were taken?

Lady Swindlers

BBC Radio 4 and BBC Sounds
October

Having previously detailed stories of *Lady Killers* down the ages, historian Lucy Worsley turns her attention to women who were con artists, thieves and even gangsters. Those profiled include Alice Diamond (1896–1952), a shoplifter who was dubbed the Queen of the 40 Thieves. The gang she led was adept at targeting department stores in the West End of London, but would head further afield if the authorities clamped down on their activities in the capital.

The Hardacres

Channel 5 and My5
October

From Playground, the production company behind Channel 5's successful reboot of *All Creatures Great and Small*, here's a new drama that takes viewers back to Yorkshire in the 1890s. Based on the novels of CL Skelton, it follows the fortunes of working-class Mary (Claire Cooper) and Sam Hardacre (Liam McMahon) and their extended family.

Following an accident on the docks, the duo have to come up with a business idea that will improve their fortunes. As the series encompasses life on a vast country estate and deals with questions around whether money can buy happiness and class, it seems reasonable to assume that their new direction in life pays off.

Hitler's British Island

Sky History
Tuesday 15 October

During the Second World War, the Germans occupied the Channel Islands and turned them into fortresses. But what else went on there? This two-part series focuses on Alderney, which was given the codename 'Adolf Island' and where the Nazis established a concentration camp, the only one on British soil. How many prisoners died there – and why, in the wake of the conflict, were war criminals never held to account?

BBC/TWENTY TWENTY/LORIAN REED-DRAKE

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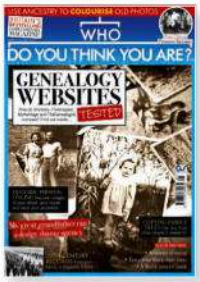

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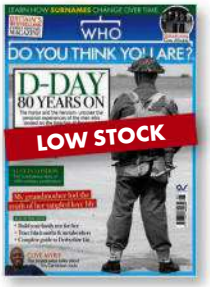

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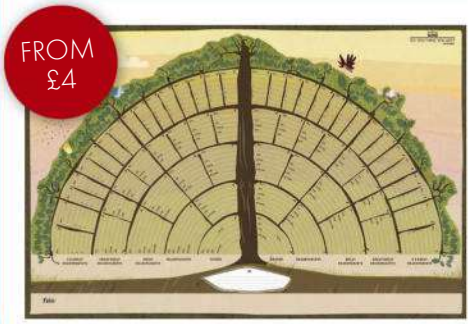

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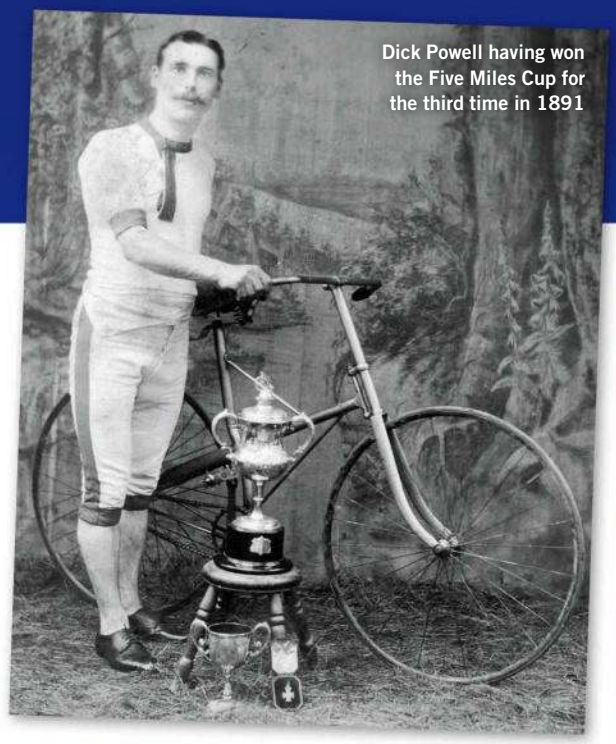


Dick Powell having won the Five Miles Cup for the third time in 1891

'Dick Was A Champion Cyclist'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

Bob Powell's great grandfather had a remarkable career as a competitive cyclist – and a bellringer. By **Gail Dixon**

Not all children are brought up with stories about heroic relatives, but I was lucky enough to belong to such a family," says Bob Powell. "Our hero was my great grandfather Richard 'Dick' Powell of Herefordshire, who was a bicycle-racing champion."

Dick was born in Hereford on 21 March 1859 to farmer and haulier William Powell and his wife Elizabeth Keene, who owned a coffee tavern. After leaving school, Dick became a mason, foreman bricklayer and builder.

Dick and his brothers Charles and Stephen shared the nation's growing passion for cycling. In the late 1880s, cumbersome penny farthings were becoming obsolete as pioneers adopted the revolutionary 'safety' bicycle. This featured two wheels of similar size, a chain-driven rear wheel and a diamond-shaped frame.

Dick made his first competitive appearance with a safety bicycle in 1887 at the 9th Annual Race Meeting of the Hereford Cycling Club. Dick's head came little above the height of the other cyclists' penny farthings, and the handicappers were confused about which mark he should start on, because they had no idea how the safety bicycle would perform.

The *Hereford Times* reported that "Dick – as does the little-un in every contest – started with the sympathy of the crowd. The onlookers soon realized that their sympathy was misplaced, and laughed heartily as he caught and passed his rivals with ridiculous ease." Bob adds, "I'd love to have been a fly on the wall, and watch my great grandfather fly past the other competitors."

Charles won the 'Hereford Five Miles Tradesmen's Challenge Cup' several times, followed by Dick who came first three times between 1888 and 1891. "After his third victory, he was allowed to keep the cup."

The two brothers joined the pioneering 'Cycle Corps' of the Hereford Rifle Volunteers, and in 1888 proved the efficiency of bicycles versus horses in a relay ride. The 40-mile route began at Ross-on-Wye in Herefordshire and ended at Ludlow in Shropshire. The Powells, and other Hereford 'A' Company riders, smashed the previous record set by the Shropshire Yeomanry Cavalry, completing the challenge in three hours six and a half minutes.

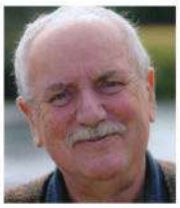
"Of the two brothers, it was Dick who rose to prominence as a champion racer." He competed in Gloucester, Swansea, Cardiff and London, achieving a run of unbroken successes that were celebrated in the press. At the Gloucester Athletic Festival in August 1891, Dick flew to victory in the Premier Handicap in front of the famous cricketer WG Grace, who was judging the race.

As an amateur, Dick amassed a cabinet full of trophies and medals, most of which are still in the family today. He continued racing competitively until 1892, when he retired from the sport. The following year he married Rosanna James and the couple had three children, including Bob's grandfather Osmond.

Dick joined the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bell Ringers and, being a powerful man, rang the cathedral's two-ton tenor bell. He continued to break records with his colleagues and in 1900 and 1904 they rang a peal of Grandsire Triples, an immensely challenging chime using seven bells featuring 5,040 changes over three and a half hours. This is said to be the bellringer's equivalent of running a marathon.

"My great uncle Ernie told me that Sir Edward Elgar was a regular visitor to Hereford Cathedral when Dick was one of the bellringers. Given their shared passion for music and cycling, they must surely have known each other."

Dick passed away in 1940, at the age of 81, and his obituary in the *Hereford Times* noted that "Dick Powell of Hereford was a name to conjure with in cycle-racing circles". Bob says, "I wish that I'd had the honour of knowing my great grandfather. How could he not be my hero?"



BOB POWELL is a retired museum curator who lives in Kingussie, Inverness-shire

> I'd love to have been a fly on the wall, and watch Dick fly past the other competitors

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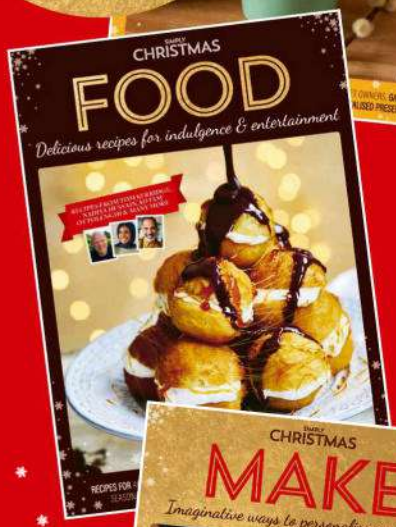

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